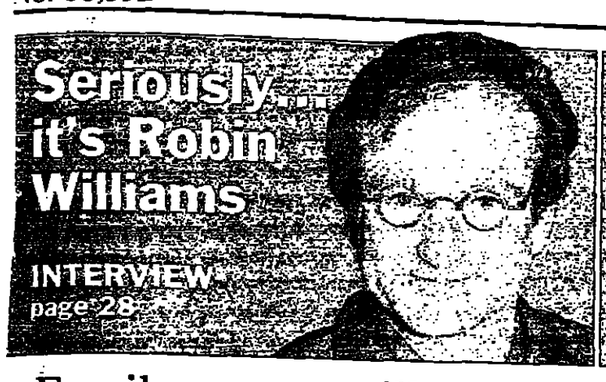
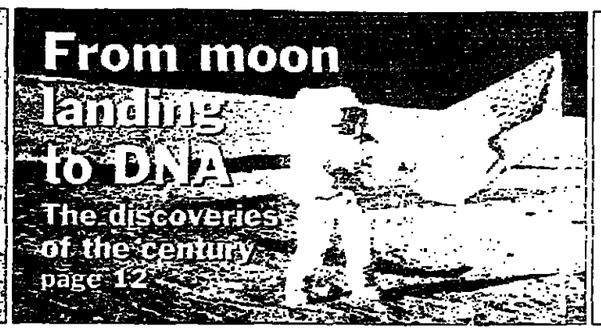
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THE TIMES

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Family money will soon settle 'Robinson mess'

Blair backs Mandelson in loan row

BY PHILIP WEBSTER POLITICAL EDITOR

TONY BLAIR was standing by Peter Mandelson last night as he surveyed the damage caused by revelations that one of his closest confidants had accepted a £373,000 loan from the embattled Treasury Minister Geoffrey Robinson.

The Prime Minister was said to regard as "a mess" a situation that the Trade Secretary could have avoided if he had disclosed earlier that he was lent the money to buy his new home in London's Notting Hill.

Mr Mandelson is to repay the loan within weeks, sources close to him disclosed last night. The money will come from "family sources," the bulk from his mother — to whom money has recently become available — his brother and himself, friends said.

But close allies of Mr Mandelson and Mr Blair told *The Times* they were "stunned" at the "appalling" misjudgment of the normally surefooted minister whose reputation was built on his ability to spot trouble coming.

The Prime Minister, though deeply unhappy at being landed in difficulty by one of his most trusted allies and architects of New Labour, was reported by friends not to regard Mr Mandelson's behaviour as a "hanging offence".

A friend said: "It looks bad, particularly because of the two people involved, but now that it has happened we have got to tough it out."

Mr Blair, who was taking a business as usual approach, and Mr Mandelson, did not speak yesterday as the Trade Secretary mounted a massive media offensive, giving interviews to virtually every television and radio bulletin, to defend his conduct.

The Prime Minister's press spokesman also supported him strongly, saying Mr Blair still had full confidence in him and was satisfied Mr Mandelson had not been guilty of conflict of interest in owing Mr Robinson money while the Department of Trade and Industry investigated Mr Robinson's business affairs.

Mr Blair accepted that Mr Mandelson had "insulated" himself by making plain to the DTI permanent secretary, Michael Scholar, that he should have no role in the consideration of Mr Robinson's affairs.

Even so, Mr Mandelson was criticised by Labour MPs and sympathetic ministers for failing to tell Mr Scholar at that time of the loan.

Mr Mandelson did not tell Mr Blair about the identity of his lender until last Thursday. This followed inquiries by a Sunday newspaper, which in the event did not materialise in the Sunday press.

Mr Blair's reaction at the time was "to look at his watch", his spokesman said.

William Hague wrote to Mr Blair last night, saying Mr Mandelson's action in not telling him or Mr Scholar was a clear breach of the minsiterial code of conduct drawn up by Mr Blair. This said that "ministers must scrupulously avoid any danger of an actual or apparent conflict of interest between their ministerial position and their private financial interests".

The code, he said, made it clear that Mr Mandelson should at least have declared the loan to Mr Scholar and minuted him about the action he was taking to avoid a conflict. "This breach is clear. It throws doubts upon the impartiality of DTI investigations into the business dealings of Geoffrey Robinson and the late Robert Maxwell's business empire.

"Is the ministerial code not worth the paper it is written on or will you enforce the rules it sets out and take action against those who breach those rules? Or is it going to be a case of one rule for friends of the Prime Minister and another rule for everyone else?"

The Trade Secretary was facing torrid press criticism, with the *Evening Standard* in London using its front-page to claim that he had concealed the truth about how he had paid for his house when asked about it by the newspaper last spring.

The second main line of attack against him was that he had not declared the loan — given to him by Mr Robinson at preferential rates — in the Commons register of members' interests.

In a dramatic move last night, Mr Mandelson wrote to the next Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, Elizabeth Filkin, asking her to investigate whether or not he should have registered the loan.

He told her he did not believe it required registration, as it was not a gift or "gained through my being an MP". However, he felt it appropriate "given the substantial media interest in the circumstances of the loan" to refer it to her.

The Conservatives — the butt for so long of sleaze allegations — had a field day as one shadow minister after another raised questions about Mr Mandelson's conduct.

The Tory Party chairman, Michael Ancram, said the situation "stinks" and challenged Mr Blair to act against the two ministers to prove his Government was not riddled with "cronyism".

The revelations led to a renewed outbreak of hostilities between supporters of Mr Mandelson and Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, with speculation about the source of the leak convulsing Westminster and Whitehall.

Mr Mandelson suggested that media reporting of the affair reflected the fact that he and Mr Robinson were "two fairly publicity-friendly, controversial, fairly exotic personalities".

He acknowledged "with hindsight" that it would have been better if he had told Mr Scholar about the loan. But he insisted that Mr Robinson had no "ulterior motive" for providing him with the money to buy a £475,000 house two years ago.

"I don't believe he had any political motivation at all in wishing to help me. He is a very wealthy man. There was no reason at the time, or indeed since, why I should have felt that he wasn't an appropriate person to loan me the sum," he said.

However, the Government assertion that the matter was over was angrily brushed aside by Mr Ancram.

"This affair quite frankly stinks," he said. "This is a devastating insight into the cronyism at the heart of New Labour. Cronyism pervades every pore of this administration. They seem to think they can do anything and get away with it.

"It is not just Peter Mandelson and Geoffrey Robinson's credibility which is on the line, it is the Prime Minister's, too. If he fails to act, we'll know everything he has said about standards in public life is a complete charade."

John Redwood asked: "How can Mr Mandelson be Britain's top company regulator when he has this kind of relationship with people undergoing scrutiny by his own department?"

Labour MPs were privately aghast at the episode and feared it would harm the Government's reputation. Some broke cover. Rhodri Morgan, chairman of the Commons public administration select committee, said that while "technically" there had been no offence, many Labour voters would be unhappy.

"I think it just leaves people with the impression of, well, 'we thought that by voting Labour and having a Labour Government we got away from this kind of thing'," said the MP for Cardiff West.

"It's a defensible position, but whether it is a wise position is quite another matter."

Leftwinger Diane Abbott, MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington, said she was "baffled" that Mr Mandelson had needed such a large loan — nine times the salary of an MP. "It is not like Geoffrey Robinson lent him fifty to the end of the week," she said.

"It is a major sum of money and I think for the appearance of propriety, you could argue that he would have done better to have declared it in the register of MPs' interests in the normal way and also to have let his officials know."

The Tories, however, believe that Mr Mandelson could still fall foul of the rules governing registration of members' interests.

The loan was made by Mr Robinson in October 1996, when Labour was in Opposition. Mr Mandelson was a key adviser to Mr Blair and Mr Robinson, a millionaire businessman, was a backbencher.

Mr Mandelson said he had paid back £40,624.68, and was in the process of paying off the outstanding £332,375.32.

INSIDE

The loan 2, 3
Peter Riddell 2
Letters 15
Leading article 15



Elizabeth Filkin, Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards

Dear Mr Filkin,

In October 1996 Geoffrey Robinson MP lent me £373,000 to assist me in the purchase of a property in London.
The material terms of the loan were as follows:
Repayment would be at a time to be agreed between the parties together with interest calculated by reference to the base rate of Midland Bank plc (or any successor bank) as varied from time to time.
Mr Robinson would be at liberty to register a charge over the property either on giving me 90 days notice or on my death.
In the event of the death of Mr Robinson I would take such steps as were reasonably required by his estate to secure the estate's interest for the repayment of the loan.
Notwithstanding the other terms part of the loan would be repaid upon sale of the flat I then owned in London.
If the loan and interest had not already been repaid, it was to be repaid upon sale of the property, unless some substitute agreement was reached.
Other than a first mortgage to the Britannia Building Society I agreed not to reduce the equity of the property by securing other loans upon the property.
The interest in the agreement was initially described as simple, but it was agreed at the time it should be compound.
I have repaid £40,624.68 of the loan to Mr Robinson upon the sale of my flat, leaving principal outstanding of £332,375.32.
From the time I became aware as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that the department was considering Mr Robinson's affairs, I have agreed with officials that I shall have no role in any such consideration, and have not done so.
I have as a matter of courtesy replied to correspondence from fellow MPs about the matter. I enclose the relevant correspondence.
I do not believe that the loan described above requires to be registered in the Register of Members' Interests, as it was not a gift or gained through my being an MP.
However, given the substantial media interest in the circumstances of the loan, I think it appropriate that I should refer the matter to you for consideration of whether I should, at any time in the past, or now, have registered the loan to me in the register.
I will of course abide by any decision you make on the matter.
I would be happy to provide you with any further information you require.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Mandelson



MICHAEL CRABTREE PA

On the move: Peter Mandelson leaving the Labour media centre on Millbank, London, yesterday



"Let's ask Uncle Geoffrey if he'll lend us enough for a Furby"



TV & RADIO 34, 35
WEATHER 18
CROSSWORDS 18, 36
LETTERS 15
OBITUARIES 17
PETER RIDDELL 2
ARTS 28, 29
CHESS & BRIDGE 31
COURT & SOCIAL 16
LAW REPORT 27
HOMES 26
BUSINESS 19-23

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Britain fears loss of Kuwait bases

FROM DANIEL MCGRORY IN KUWAIT CITY

THE aircraft carrier *Invincible* is being moved to the Gulf because Britain fears it will not be allowed to use Kuwaiti airbases to launch future bombing missions on Iraq.

Kuwait has been condemned by its Arab neighbours for letting it be known that its desert air bases were used as launchpads by British and US aircraft. Just hours after Operation Desert Fox ended so abruptly, Tony Blair signalled that *Invincible* was being sent to reinforce Britain's military presence against President Saddam Hussein.

The real motive, say senior military and diplomatic sources in the region, is that Britain could then launch airstrikes without having to seek permission from its nervous hosts. The dozen Tornado GR1 bombers, which played a pivotal role in Desert Fox, will stay for the moment at the Ali-al-Salem airbase, 18 miles northwest of Kuwait City, to enforce the "Southern Watch" no-fly zone over southern Iraq.

The Kuwaitis want the protective air shield to continue, but are understood to be reluctant to let the RAF fly any more bombing sorties from here. Members of the royal family are now complaining they were "dragged" unwittingly into Desert Fox. Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, said Kuwait was "not party" to the airstrikes.

One diplomatic source said: "We need the Tornados to be really effective against Saddam, but we appreciate the Kuwaitis' local difficulties and sensitivities. Obviously we have to make alternative arrangements if we are refused permission to use bases in Kuwait." *Invincible* is expected to reach the Gulf at the end of January.

Tornados on target, page 11

Lord Soper dies at 95

Lord Soper, the Methodist preacher and Labour peer, died peacefully at his London home. He was 95.

Until last month he was still preaching from a wheelchair at Speaker's Corner, and he had made the last of his weekly appearances at Tower Hill on December 2.....Pages 4, 17

GEC prepares for merger

GEC is to split its industrial and defence businesses, preparing the ground for a major merger, which is likely to be with British Aerospace.

The news effectively brings to an end the industrial behemoth created by Lord Weinstock.....Page 19

Burrell's ally speaks out

A woman on the staff of the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund said that it had failed to support Paul Burrell, the Princess's butler, over the loss of his job as fundraising events manager.....Page 7

China's red turns green for balloon

BY HELEN RUMBELOW

RICHARD Branson's round-the-world balloon attempt weathered another crisis yesterday as he was granted safe passage over China with the help of our man in Beijing.

The deal, at 2pm yesterday, broke a tense stand-off between the Chinese and the ICO Global Challenger, with Beijing ordering the balloon to land and the trespassers insisting it was too dangerous.

The deal was negotiated by Anthony Galsworthy, the British Ambassador, who had been working on the balloonists' behalf since they drifted across the Himalayas into forbidden Chinese airspace at 10pm on Monday.

The Foreign Office said that his efforts, together with a personal message from Tony Blair to Zhu Rongji, the Premier, meant the Chinese would tolerate the balloon provided it left Chinese airspace by the quickest possible route.

The news came seven hours after Mr Branson rejected orders to land at Lhasa airport, saying there was too much cloud cover to make a safe descent. The Virgin tycoon described the decision as "brilliant, brilliant, brilliant".

He and his crew, Per Lindstrand and Steve Fossett, are now directing their efforts at catching the tail of the Pacific jetstream, a 200mph wind that could carry the balloon to California by Christmas Day.

Yesterday, the balloon was dawdling at 29mph and 29,000ft above Chengdu, setting the team back by a day. "We are all exhilarated but we now face the most dangerous part of the whole flight: getting across the Pacific," said Mike Kendrick, the project director. "We're definitely using more fuel than we expected."

If they reach the west coast of America they are likely to beat Mr Fossett's distance record of 14,233 miles in a balloon, set in August.

THE MANDELSON LOAN: THE COST

Scratching the surface of Labour's own New Testament

Michael Gove reports on how the great image-maker's insights on the Tories have returned to haunt him

IT IS all there in the New Labour Testament. "The history of politics is littered with individual lapses of judgment and occasional sordid episodes. . . as far as the electorate is concerned, many think we have a Government that consists of business back-scratchers and a Parliament made up of politicians on the make."

When Peter Mandelson and his co-author Roger Liddle sermonised thus in their book *The Blair Revolution: Can New Labour Deliver?* the future Secretary of State cannot have imagined that he would become one of those politicians so harshly judged by the electorate for appearing to have had his back so lavishly scratched.

Cynics could be forgiven for wondering if the scratcher in question, Geoffrey Robinson, might not have calculated that his helping hand to Mr Mandelson was generosity which would be amply repaid. After all, winning the goodwill of the architect of New Labour must surely be one of the better ways of securing a place in the Blairite family. After years of backbench obscurity a valuable alliance would have been made, to complement his existing friendship with Gordon Brown.

To have both these names in his pocketbook would have been a wise, hedging investment. As wise, say, as a Sicilian businessmen being on good terms with both the Corleones and the Gottis.

But if Mr Robinson's desire to cover his options is understandable, there are still as many unanswered questions in this affair. The most curious is why Mr Mandelson, normally shrewd, keenly aware of how sleaze stained the Tories and almost painfully sensitive to the *look* of things, should be so foolish as to accept a soft loan from a parliamentary colleague.

Peter's friends attribute the decision to the Mandelsonian traits of vanity and fastidiousness, the two Achilles heels veiled by his Paul Smith socks.

One who knows, and admires, the minister believes that he was increasingly frustrated by mixing with champagne socialists such as the novelist Robert Harris, the businessman Sir Dennis Stevenson and the media mogul Baron Alli of Norbury and then having to return to his *vin ordinaire* flat.

How could he return the hospitality of Parker Bowleses and peers in dowdy North London? The young man in a hurry had to go West.

Why, though, did he not borrow money from a figure at a safe distance from politics, such as Mr Harris or Sir Denys? Indeed, when Westminster figures speculated on the source of the cash for Mr Mandelson's flat they imagined it might be the result of an arrangement with such a figure.

But another Mandelson friend argues: "Peter, curiously, wouldn't want to be beholden to a proper friend. He would have thought it was easier to come to an arrangement with a political acquaintance who was less close to him." A curiously fastidious desire not to complicate his social friendships led Mr Mandelson to the future Paymaster-General.

As the provider of occasional holiday accommodation to the Blairs and a permanent welcome at his penthouse for Gordon Brown, Mr Robinson was already embedded in New Labour affections. He might have expected preferment after an election victory.

But with his primary reputation still resting as a supporter of Mr Brown, it would have seemed prudent to take out insurance by winning the support of Mr Brown's main rival inside the Labour leadership — Mr Mandelson. To do so with a simple soft loan must have seemed too perfect.

As well as securing moderate interest payments, some speculate that the investment in Mr Mandelson may have secured other dividends. At the last reshuffle, many of Mr Brown's under-performing allies were chopped. Out went the luckless Nigel Griffiths and the hopeless Tom Clarke.

But surviving unscathed, despite all manner of allegations about offshore tax havens and recurrent amnesia about declarations of interest, was lucky Mr Robinson. It is almost certainly too much to assume that Mr Mandelson put in a good word for his benefactor. But perhaps an absence of bad ones might, just, have helped.

Can either minister avoid the chop now? Provided there are no other complicating matters to emerge, they might well. Mr Mandelson is a talented politician with powerful friends but his best ally now will not be Mr Robinson or Mr Blair but total candour.

He has a relationship to rebuild with his civil servants and colleagues who have been kept in the dark. The publication of all the relevant details relating to the house purchase may help clear the account.

But lingering questions will remain about the judgment of both ministers. As Mr Mandelson wrote in *The Blair Revolution*, politics suffers when politicians believe that "anything anyone in public life can do to assist a private interest in making a profit is somehow in the public interest, as long as people keep on the right side of the law."

Peter's friends blame Brown aide for leak

Trade Secretary's circle suspects Charlie Whelan of reopening old wounds, reports **Philip Webster**

WHENEVER Peter Mandelson has attracted bad publicity recently his friends have claimed that Charlie Whelan, Gordon Brown's ubiquitous press secretary, is behind it.

When the Trade Secretary said on the *Today* programme yesterday that the information about his loan from Geoffrey Robinson had been leaked to damage him, there was no doubt at all that he considered Mr Whelan a prime suspect — his friends had said as much on Monday night.

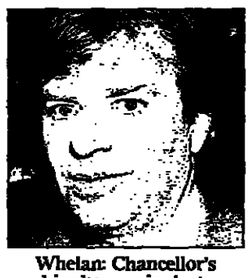
Mr Mandelson said yesterday that if he had disclosed the loan earlier it would have saved him a lot of trouble because his decision not to do so had "given the chance to someone to tell the papers".

It had been done, he said, in a "negative and mischievous way that deliberately misconstrues my actions and places very unsympathetic construction on my actions".

When, earlier this month, Treasury sources were reported to be criticising Mr Mandelson for deciding against a full-scale privatisation of the Post Office, the Trade Secretary's camp again directed their private fire at Mr Whelan.

But the Brownites (not including Mr Whelan, who yesterday declined to comment) have their own theory — that the Mandelsonians, fearing that the loan was about to be revealed in an unauthorised biography of their man in the new year, chose to break the news themselves while the Commons was not sitting, to avoid a much rougher time later on. They had, the Brown camp suggests, set out to deny the Paul Routledge book the publicity of a "blockbuster" news story on its publication.

There is no evidence at all that Mr Whelan was responsible for either of the disclosures blamed on him. *The Guardian* stated explicitly that he was not the source of their information about the loan. Treasury officials have also firmly denied that they had made any criticism of Mr Mandelson over the Post Office.



Whelan: Chancellor's ubiquitous spin-doctor

Equally, there is no evidence at all that the Mandelson camp was behind it. But the fact that such charges were being levelled showed that, in spite of constant pleas from Tony Blair to Mr Mandelson and Mr Brown, one of the longest-running feuds in politics is far from over.

The relationship between the two men has improved but it remains uneasy and wary. Mr Blair asked Mr Brown to break the news to Mr Mandelson of his promotion to the Cabinet last July and they are understood to have established a fairly good working relationship.

But the mood between their friends has always been frosty and suspicious. After yesterday they are back in the deep-freeze, with the beleaguered Mr Robinson — ironically a good friend of both men — caught in the crossfire.

Mr Mandelson's decision to back Mr Blair rather than Mr Brown in the 1994 leadership race destroyed his once-close friendship with the Chancellor and their friends have never got over it.

A year ago there were bitter recriminations between the Blair and Brown camps. Mr Routledge's biography of Mr Brown depicted his continuing resentment of Mr Blair's leadership victory and betrayed his lingering ambition for the post. It was even suggested by some Mandelson friends yesterday that the loan leak was a delayed reprisal for the glee that they were alleged to have shown at Mr Brown's difficulties on that occasion.

The Chancellor also suffered setbacks in the summer reshuffle when one of his leading supporters, Nick Brown, the then chief whip, was moved sideways to agriculture, other allies were dropped from the Government and Blairites had the better of the promotions. Mr Mandelson knows that he has been damaged by the latest revelation and the way it has come out. But it was the fact that the accusations and counter-accusations began to fly again between the camps at the first sign of trouble that will have infuriated Mr Blair, who has shown signs recently of growing weary with both sides.

Other theories were circulating at Westminster yesterday and its was even claimed that a journalist, a sworn enemy of Mr Routledge, had managed to obtain a leak from a draft of the biography and had published it in order to ruin its launch. The Mandelson camp conceded that if the leak scuppered the Routledge book it would be the "silver lining" in the cloud that had enveloped him.

Mr Robinson, who has faced media and Opposition calls to resign for months over his past business links with Robert Maxwell, was looking no less or more vulnerable.

Many at Westminster thought he might choose this pre-Christmas week to bow out of the Government. It could still happen soon. Mr Robinson might conclude that his membership of the Government is causing Mr Blair more trouble than it is worth and use the Mandelson storm as a further reason to go now.

However, Mr Blair might be reluctant for Mr Robinson to go and to be seen to be carrying the can for Mr Mandelson, because under such circumstances the call for Mr Mandelson to follow would be deafening.

Leading article and letters, page 15

ANTHONY UPTON



Robinson: the loan will not damage him as much as it will Mr Mandelson but he may see it as another reason to resign

Robinson dispenses largesse to friends at the top

By Roland Watson

FOR an approachable and genial character, Geoffrey Robinson lacks a wide circle of friends in Westminster.

By absenting himself from Commons life in the late Eighties and early Nineties to make his millions, he is a stranger to many Labour MPs.

But Mr Robinson does boast three good friends in politics — and they just happen to be the three most powerful people in government. Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and Peter Mandelson have all benefited from Mr Robinson's largesse since he decided to return to frontline politics during the last Parliament.

Mr Robinson's rise through the ranks of new Labour was initially little noticed. But as the general election neared, his high standing among those who mattered became apparent.

On July 11, [illegible] MP for Coventry North West swept up to the river entrance of the Savoy Hotel to attend Labour's annual gala fundraising dinner. In the back of his chauffeur-driven Jaguar was Ed Balls, Mr Brown's economics adviser. It was one of the first clues to the close links that had developed between Mr Robinson and the then Shadow Chancellor.

The relationship was both political and social. Mr Robinson, a former Jaguar chief executive, helped Mr Brown to design his windfall tax on the privatised industries. Mr Robinson also helped to fund a limited company, the Smith Political Economy Unit, set up in 1996, which gave Mr Brown tens of thousands of pounds of free research.

Equally importantly, Mr Robinson's Park Lane penthouse has offered a late-night beer-drinking, pizza-eating, football-watching haven away from Westminster for the Chancellor's close team, including his press secretary Charlie Whelan and Mr Balls.

Mr Brown has also enjoyed a stay at Mr Robinson's £1.2 million Cannes apartment, and Tony Blair has gone on holiday twice at another of his magnificent properties, his villa in Tuscany.

It was officially denied yesterday that Mr Robinson had lent money to any other minister. But it would come as little surprise to learn that others had enjoyed his hospitality.

Even people he has only just met are invited to pop in to the Tuscan villa if they are ever in the area.

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Up to £10,000	5.75	5.25	5.25
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£100,000+	6.35	5.85	5.85

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£50,000+	5.92	5.44	5.55
£100,000+	6.21	5.73	5.85

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King of Spin in whirl of interviews

By Roland Watson, Political Correspondent

RARELY has the King of Spin had to whirl with quite such speed as in the past 24 hours.

In recent years there have been fires to fight and squalls to calm when, as Labour's chief spin-doctor, he earned his stripes as The Prince of Darkness.

Those episodes were, however, largely on behalf of colleagues in trouble or the party itself. His role was also almost always behind the scenes, spelling out the "line" to take and giving orders about who should speak and when.

Never has Mr Mandelson's personal reputation been so at stake as over his judgment in accepting the £373,000 loan from Geoffrey Robinson.

His reaction offered a classic users' guide on how to handle a political crisis.

He could have gone to ground and let the story simmer away while trying to maintain a dignified silence.

Instead, even before the first editions of Monday's papers had appeared, the Trade Secretary had hit the airwaves, trying to draw the sting from what he knew was an intensely damaging story.

He first appeared on BBC *2's Newsnight*, portraying himself as the much-maligned soul, which became a hallmark of his inverviews throughout yesterday.

The tactic seemed to be: admit that, with hindsight, you may have done things differently, but always remind the public that journalists are a slippery bunch and that there are enemies out there trying to get you.

"The reason I'm speaking to you this morning is that I'm just not prepared to let that mud stick," he told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme.

He conceded that the Government may have been damaged by the affair, but added in the same breath that that was bound to happen "when you wake up and see newspapers kicking you around in this way . . . and I've had my fair share of it in the past."

Leaving his home before dawn yesterday, he said nothing to waiting journalists other than that he would reserve his words for the broadcast studios. Realising that refusing any requests for an interview could be seen as a sign of weakness, he ploughed through interview after interview.

It led to the extraordinary spectacle of a senior Cabinet minister being questioned about which boxes he had ticked on his mortgage application form, along with a series of detailed questions about his personal finances.

One source close to Mr Mandelson said the minister had not turned down a single interview.

"We got a rough press but he feels confident that he has done everything by the book. He has accepted every media invitation because he wants to put that over."

Foolish mistake that weakens Blair

Peter Mandelson has seriously embarrassed Tony Blair. Whatever else emerges about the loan from Geoffrey Robinson, Mr Mandelson has been guilty of a foolish misjudgment that has tarnished both his own reputation and the Government as a whole.

Having made so much noise ahead of the general election about Tory sleaze, Labour is vulnerable to the same charge itself, now recast as "cronyism". This contradicts pious talk by ministers about cleaning up politics and makes the Blairites seem just like everyone else.

What is so damaging is that Mr Mandelson is as close to Mr Blair as anyone apart from Gordon Brown, the other main figure in Mr Robinson's network of influence. The affair has already reopened infighting between the Mandelson and Brown camps.

For all his reputation as a mixture of Machiavelli and Rasputin, Mr Mandelson has been central both to the rise of Mr Blair himself and to the creation of Blairism. He remains one of the most formidable strategists in British politics and a brilliant day-to-day tactician, as he showed again yesterday in trying to answer his critics by giving interviews on all the main television and radio programmes. He has become crucial in developing Mr Blair's more pro-European approach, notably with the new German Chancellor, and he has shown a generally sure touch as Trade and Industry Secretary.

However, there has always been another side to Mr Mandelson. He has enjoyed the social scene, mixing with royalty as well as showbusiness and media high-flyers, becoming the chic face of new Labour. Friends have always been worried that his liking for the glitzy world would land him in trouble. They questioned his judgment in accepting the loan of a car before the election from James Palumbo of

Peter RIDDELL ON POLITICS

the Ministry of Sound.

Mr Mandelson's ambition to own a splendid London town house like some of his friends ran ahead of his usually shrewd judgment. However apparently reasonable his explanation yesterday about securing a temporary loan before family money became available, he forgot the first rule of Westminster politics: what would it look like if the arrangement became public?

Mr Robinson was, admittedly, a less controversial figure two years ago. But it is still very odd for one MP to borrow such a huge sum on such favourable terms from another MP, especially from a likely future ministerial colleague and one already financially involved with Labour. The loan was bound to look like bizarre and "cronyism" to the millions struggling to service mortgages a tenth that size, as well as to Labour supporters.

Mr Mandelson was adamant yesterday that there was "no conflict of interest or potential or an appearance of a conflict of interest". There is no evidence that, as Trade and Industry Secretary, he has acted to favour Mr Robinson. He has always insisted that he never discussed Mr Robinson's political position with Mr Blair.

However, Mr Mandelson was wrong not to have given the full facts to his Permanent Secretary at an earlier stage, even if he had already withdrawn from decisions affecting Mr Robinson. The Tories yesterday raised a number of pertinent questions about whether Mr Mandelson should have declared the loan in the MPs' register of interests and about whether he breached the ministerial code. His blanket denials may be correct but he will have to answer these detailed questions.

On what has been disclosed so far, Mr Mandelson should survive.

But his credibility has been undermined, and this, in turn, weakens the whole new Labour programme and Mr Blair himself.

THE MANDELSON LOAN: THE HIGH LIVING

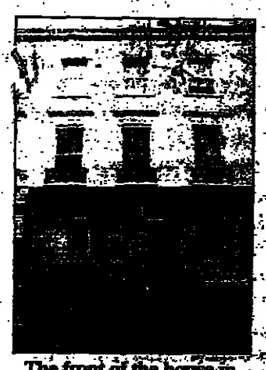
Designer home is minimalist at heart

By Richard Duce, Rachel Kelly, Marcus Binney and Alex O'Connell

STYLE does not come cheap in the newly fashionable corner of West London where Peter Mandelson has chosen to create a minimalist shrine behind the black front door of his white, stucco-fronted terraced home.

The house in Notting Hill for which Mr Mandelson paid £465,000 in October 1996 has been extensively redesigned internally by the architect Seth Stein, who is rapidly establishing a reputation among London's fashionable elite. One estimate puts the cost of the work at £50,000, for which Mr Stein's fee would have been some 12 to 14 per cent.

For that, Mr Mandelson has gained a lot of white walls throughout the four-storey house which have been adorned with the odd painting. The minister is so smitten with the minimalist interior that he is thought to consult Mr Stein, the 38-year-old protégé of both the architects Lord Rogers of Riverside and Sir Norman Foster, before deciding on furniture.



The front of the house in Northumberland Place

An insight into the domestic world of Mr Mandelson was captured in a *Vogue* magazine photograph taken by Lord Snowdon. It shows the Cabinet minister relaxing in an £1,800 tan leather chair in front of black louvred windows and what appears to be a Jacobean portrait.

Whatever his difficulties, Mr Mandelson still commands loyalty from friends, who stonewalled inquiries about the interior of the house. Robert Harris, best-selling author of *Fatherland* and *Archangel*, said: "The house displays impeccable taste. I wouldn't want to say any more than that."

Another visitor to the house, albeit anonymous, was more forthcoming. "It is clean, completely white. Modern minimalist with very little furniture. I must confess I can't remember what the loo was like."

Along with modern paintings, Mr Mandelson also has an eye for black and white photographs bought at a nearby specialist shop.

Mr Stein was unavailable for comment about his work at his business in West Kensington yesterday. The *Architectural Review* this year tipped him as one of six architects to watch. "He is building a reputation with a series of small but beautifully executed domestic and commercial projects," it said.

Architects say that minimalism may look simple but that it often demands a disproportionate amount of design time and very expensive hand-crafted detail so that elements such as storage, nails, joints and other fixtures are invisible.

Mr Mandelson will do well out of moving into Northumberland Place in London W2, where he now numbers among his neighbours Sir Ian Wrigglesworth, chairman of the lobby firm, GPC; Carla Powell, the wife of Sir Charles, former private secretary to Baroness Thatcher; and Michael Jackson, chief executive of Channel 4. His house would now fetch close to £700,000.

The streets that make up what is known locally as Westbourne village comprise Chepstow Road (residents include Rosie Boycott, Editor of *The Express*); Courtnell Street (Paula Yates is renting a house here); Artesian Road (the celebrity hairdresser Charles Worthington has a house here, and Sir Geoffrey Shakerley, society photographer and former husband of the Queen's cousin, Lady Elizabeth Anson, has just sold a house for around £700,000); and Westbourne Park Road (Sir Paul McCartney's daughter, Stella, this year bought a house estimated to cost around £600,000).

The residents of Northumberland Place, a row of houses built around 1850, divide into the old guard — writers such as Harry Keating and Philip Knightley, the art historian Christopher Wright, and teachers and academics — and the monied younger buyers. The latter enjoy the fact that shops such as Lulu Guinness handbags, Ghost and Nick Ashley (son of Laura) have opened up on nearby Ledbury Road, and the likes of Agnes B are to be found in Westbourne Grove. There is a wealth of cafés, such as 206 and Tom's (son of Terence Conran), where they can enjoy caffe latte and cappuccino after a workout at Lambton Place Health Club, whose members include John Cleese, Lady Antonia Fraser, Kevin Maxwell and Mariella Frostrup.

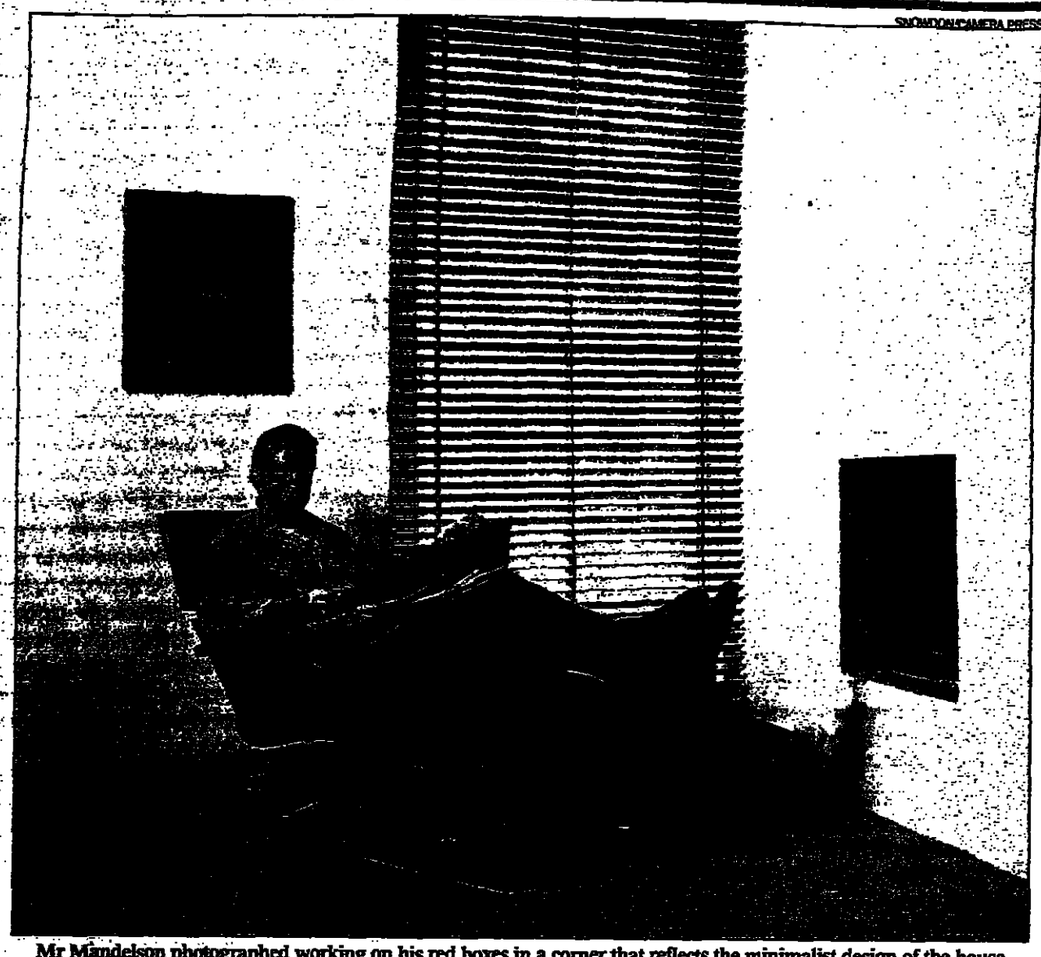
Pierre Pechan Patisserie Française in Chepstow Road is a mere bun throw from Mr Mandelson's front door. Lucy Sodoro, shop assistant in the cake-lover's paradise, said that he often popped by.

For snacks and staples there is B2, a 24-hour convenience store in the Grove. Shop manager Jamila Abdel-Jalil, 31, serves Mr Mandelson every morning. She said: "He buys a pint of semi-skimmed milk every morning and all the big newspapers. He zips in and then out again very quickly."

Apart from these brief forays, Mr Mandelson is rarely seen in the street, usually when nipping from his chauffeur-driven car, clutching his red boxes, up the short path to his front door. However, he can often be seen on Saturday mornings, when the downstairs shutters are thrown open, with a telephone almost constantly at his ear.

The ground floor of the house, which he bought after selling his flat in Clerkenwell, comprises a minimalist white kitchen with modern chairs. On the first floor is a knock-through drawing room from which Mr Mandelson has removed all period features such as the fireplace and cornicing in favour of simple white lines. Upstairs is his bedroom and bathroom. There are a further two bedrooms and a bathroom in the basement, which recently has suffered from leaky drains.

All the rooms are shielded from inquiring eyes by simple shutters, blinds or curtains. There is a modest front garden and, like other houses in the street, a canopy over the ground floor.



SNOWDON/CAMERA PRESS

Mr Mandelson photographed working on his red boxes in a corner that reflects the minimalist design of the house

'Exotic' party animal stands out from pack

By James Landale, political correspondent

WHEN Peter Mandelson described himself yesterday as exotic, the *mot* could not have been more *juste*.

In a monochrome Labour Government, the Trade and Industry Secretary has provided an unlikely but necessary touch of colour, style and radical chic.

While many ministers might spend an evening working on their red boxes, Mr Mandelson is as likely to be out clubbing, socialising with royalty and celebrities, or even being fitted for a new moleskin suit.

Mr Mandelson said in an interview last year that he did "not feel part of society". He was, he said, too much of a "radical figure" to need the "stamp of approval of society". But in recent years he has made huge efforts to get ahead in society. This is the context in which he clearly felt the need to upgrade his small ground-floor flat in Clerkenwell for a Notting Hill townhouse.

This social aspiration has marked Mr Mandelson out in the new Labour crowd. Yesterday he tacitly acknowledged that on Radio 4's *Today* when he described himself and Geoffrey Robinson, the Treasury Minister, as "publicity-friendly, controversial, fairly exotic personalities".

He may be ones of the hardest-working ministers but Mr Mandelson, 45, is also new Labour's ambassador-at-large in society. To him, the words "party engagement" can mean as much a night with showbusiness friends as an evening with constituents in Hartlepool.

His social contacts reach the highest levels: he is a close friend of the Prince of Wales and Camilla Parker Bowles and often visits Highgrove. He was the only Cabinet minister invited to celebrate the Prince's 50th birthday last month. He is also a friend to the Rothschild family.

His friendships cross party divides. He was introduced to the Prince by Carla Powell, the society hostess and wife of Sir Charles Powell, the former foreign affairs adviser to Baroness Thatcher. Mr Mandelson stayed with the Powells at their home in Bayswater while his Notting Hill house was being refurbished.

The minister attended the wedding of Nicholas, Lady Powell's son, in the South of France last summer where he was photographed with the Duchess of York. A few weeks later he was pictured with the model Elle Macpherson at a charity function.

Another friend, the actor Stephen Fry, wrote a tribute to Mr Mandelson in *The Big Issue* magazine last year entitled "My Friend the Devil". He is also close to Robert Harris, the millionaire author, and Trevor Phillips, the broadcaster and a potential mayor of London.

Famed for his energetic dancing, Mr Mandelson is a frequent visitor to the Ministry of Sound nightclub in South London. He is a close friend of James Palumbo, the club's owner, who lent a car to the Labour Party during the general election campaign. Other favoured haunts include the Soho House club in Central London, the drinking hole for the new Labour establishment.

He is also one of the nattiest dressers in Parliament. Sharp dark suits with crisp white shirts and carefully chosen ties are his trademark. On social engagements he is often spotted wearing a dark brushed-cotton moleskin suit. He favours Paul Smith designs and attends fashion shows.

Mr Mandelson's only known breach of fashion etiquette came when he was spotted in some less than flattering sports gear while out shopping in London. But he had the excuse that he had been working out at the exclusive Lambton Place health club where he mixes with other fitness enthusiasts such as John Cleese, Kevin Maxwell and Mariella Frostrup.

How much? Did he buy the street?

By Paul Wilkinson

THE details of Peter Mandelson's loan did not impress residents in his constituency, where local wags joked that the same amount of money could buy a whole street.

In Hartlepool, a two-up, two-down terrace can cost less than £20,000. Even a six-bedroomed detached mansion in its own grounds sells for considerably less than his Notting Hill address.

Mr Mandelson is honorary president of Hartlepool United FC, whose biggest recent signing, Craig Midgley, joined from Bradford for £10,000 last March. Most of the rest of the team arrived on free transfers or through the youth side.

In a town where the traditional industries of steel and shipyards have gone and unemployment among the 91,000 population is hovering just above 11 per cent, there are some substantial £300,000 properties, mostly near Beechwood, on the edge of the town centre and once home to the wealthy industrialists who established the town in the last century.

Mr Mandelson's detached constituency home is on the leafy western side of town and is valued at about £100,000. Among his constituents, Mick Richardson, 29, a builder, said: "He should be concentrating on bringing more jobs, wealth and prosperity to the region. As it is, he is having to defend his reputation and it damages his credibility in the eyes of the many people."

Sandra Hurley, 35, a mother of two, said: "Mr Mandelson is privileged because ordinary people struggle to get a mortgage for £30,000 or £40,000. I am a Labour supporter and this would not stop me voting for Mandelson. But this makes people think that Labour are not whiter than white. Mr Mandelson has suffered from a major error of judgment and he deserves all the criticism he gets. If these politicians had more in common with ordinary people who vote for them, there would be none of this."

Paul Conville, 23, a factory worker, said: "It is a scandal. I've got a mortgage which I struggle to pay and will be around my neck for 25 years. It's amazing he can borrow the money from a mate. It just goes to show how far removed he is from reality."

Mortgage costs £28,000 a year

By Susan Emmett

PETER MANDELSON could be spending £28,000 a year to pay off his mortgage debts.

As Trade and Industry Secretary, he earns £90,000. After tax, assuming that Mr Mandelson is entitled to the single person's tax allowance, he is left with around £60,000. On a normal repayment basis, he could be paying around £20,812 of this a year to Geoffrey Robinson. But Mr Mandelson's special low-interest rate deal of 6.25 per cent with the Paymaster General would save him around £6,000 a year. A further £6,992 of Mr Mandelson's salary could go to the Britannia Building Society, where he has another loan of a possible £92,000. This is the difference between Mr Robinson's loan and the purchase value of the house in October 1996.

After these repayments, he is left with some £2,700 a month from which he must pay council tax, pension contributions and the cost of redecorating his home. A lump sum repayment of £40,624.68 in 1997 would have cut the loan to £332,375.32, according to the letter sent yesterday by Mr Mandelson to the Commissioner for Parliamentary Interests. In it he said that this money came from the sale of his flat.

Mr Mandelson's interest rate of 6.25 per cent is the same as the base rate at high-street banks. This is lower than the usual standard variable mortgage rate paid by 70 per cent of home owners.

A mortgage from an ordinary high street lender would cost Mr Mandelson £25,641 a year at the current variable mortgage rate of 7.7 per cent.

Banks and building societies would be highly unlikely to lend £375,000 to someone earning £40,000, as Mr Mandelson was two years ago as MP for Hartlepool. One mortgage expert said: "Mandelson was borrowing about 11 times his salary. There isn't a lender in the country that would knowingly do that."

Mother lends a helping hand

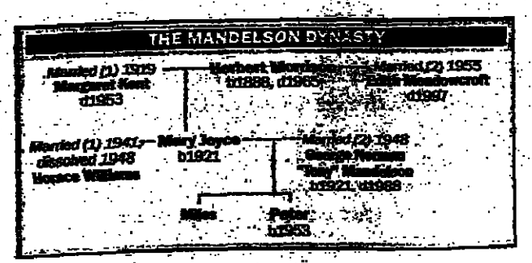
By Dominic Kennedy and Claudia Joseph

PETER MANDELSON has suggested that legacies due from his father and grandfather would help to pay back the £373,000 he borrowed from Geoffrey Robinson.

The loan was made shortly before the widow of his grandfather, Herbert Morrison, died leaving £402,079, but she is not understood to be the source of the bequests.

Rather, it is Peter Mandelson's mother Mary, the daughter of Herbert Morrison, the wartime Labour Home Secretary, and his first wife Margaret, who will help Mr Mandelson to repay the loan.

Herbert Morrison, who died in 1965, left £500 to his daughter in his will. He gave the bulk of his £28,600 estate to "my dear wife and helpmate, Edith, who has cared for me so much".



Lady Morrison became owner of his literary estate, including his diaries and letters, although she had to share that inheritance with Daniel Chester, Warden of Nuffield College, Oxford.

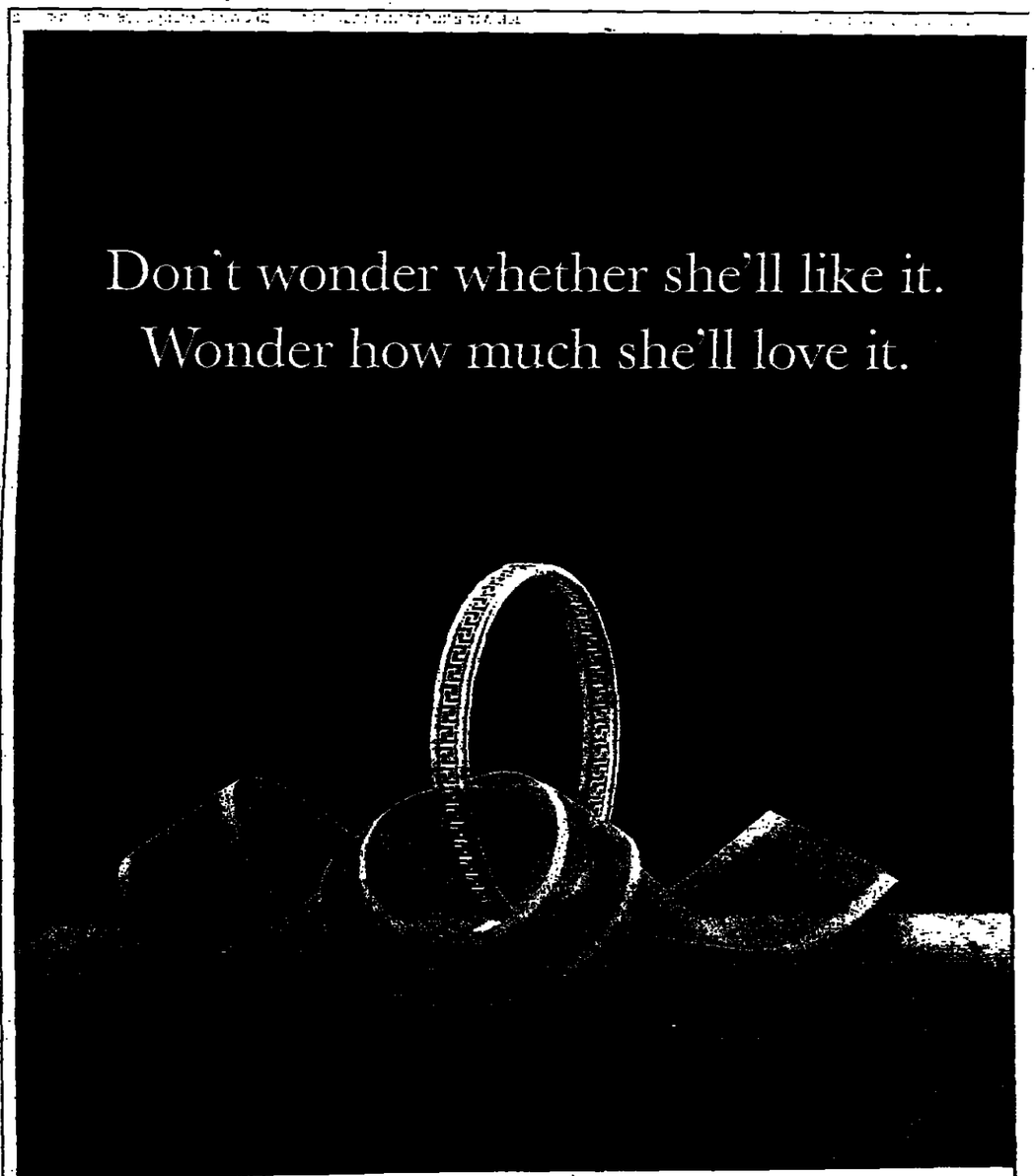
She died in January 1997, but it is not yet clear whether the Mandelsons could have been hoping to receive any of the money when her will was read. A Conservative-voting golfer from Rochdale, she was said in Labour circles to have begrudged the amount of time her husband spent with his daughter. His first wife had died in 1955.

Mr Mandelson's father George, known as Tony, died in 1988 leaving the family home in Hampstead Garden Suburb, North London, to his widow Mary. His will was valued at £51,711. The semi-detached house is now worth at least £500,000.

"Tony" Mandelson was the advertising manager and financial editor of the *Jewish Chronicle* and a keen buyer of stocks and shares, as a tribute in the paper disclosed.

The purchase of Mr Mandelson's £475,000 Georgian house in Notting Hill sparked an investigation last year by the London *Evening Standard*. When asked to explain how he could afford such luxury, he told the newspaper that some of the money came via his mother from legacies left by his grandfather and father.

He also pointed out that some money came from selling the flat that he had shared with two Labour Party workers in the increasingly fashionable area of Clerkenwell. Satisfied, the newspaper halted its investigation.



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Ernest Jones

THE DIAMOND & WATCH SPECIALIST

Soapbox Soper was 'the last of his kind'

Ruth Gledhill on tributes to the peer and preacher, who has died at his London home aged 95

LORD SOPER, the veteran Labour peer and Methodist soapbox preacher, died at his London home yesterday after a long illness.

Until last month he had been drawing the crowds at Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park, albeit preaching from a wheelchair. A supporter of radical causes such as the League Against Cruel Sports, he also used to preach weekly at Tower Hill, where he made his last appearance on December 2.

The 95-year-old peer had returned home from hospital after being treated for a chest infection. He sat in his favourite chair before dying peacefully, leaving four daughters, nine grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Tributes poured in for the century's last great open-air preacher, inheritor of a tradition embodied by the co-founder of Methodism, John Wesley. Colleagues told of tourists visiting London and including a visit to hear "Soapie", as he was known, preaching at Hyde Park on Sunday afternoons or Tower Hill on Wednesday lunchtimes, along with the changing of the guard and a West End play.

Always controversial, he once said in the 1950s that he would rather face Communism in England than a third world war. As president of the League Against Cruel Sports, he campaigned to persuade the National Trust to ban deer hunting from its estates.

His radicalism never diminished, in spite of increasing illness. As recently as March last year he said he believed shoplifting from supermarkets was not necessarily wrong because "the capitalist system is based on stealing".

Twelve months earlier he criticised the Queen, saying she showed an "intolerable lack of feeling" after she opened the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds and remarked that the weapons of war "can be as beautiful as they are terrible".

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, said: "Donald's contribution to Methodism and to British Christianity has been outstanding. As a teacher, prophet, evangelist and social reformer he stood firmly within the Methodist tradition but his gifts have enriched us all. We shall miss him."



Donald Soper speaking at Tower Hill in the 1950s

Cardinal Basil Hume, Archbishop of Westminster, said: "I always had enormous respect for Lord Soper. He was a man of great courage and integrity."

Dr Leslie Griffiths, minister at Wesley's Chapel in the City of London and former minister at the West London Mission when Lord Soper was working there as a retired but active minister, said: "A British rather than a Methodist institution has come to an end. No-one can replace him. He managed to take the Christian message that was so important to him out of its wraps and take it abroad to the highways and byways. No-one else holds a candle to him."

The Rev William Lynn, pastoral director of NCH Action for Children, the leading charity, with which Lord Soper was involved for many years, said: "His commitment to people in difficulty as a result of poverty, and the way that afflicted children, young people and families, underpinned his work for the charity.

"He would regularly attend supporter meetings of the charity and entertain the gathering with his tin whistle. He believed that at the heart of Methodism is the call to stand alongside the poor."

Dr Nigel Collinson, secretary of the Methodist Conference, said: "Donald Soper was quite simply one of the best-known Christian ministers of his generation. He took seriously the moral teaching of Jesus Christ and challenged others to do the same."

Chris Holmes, director of Shelter, chaired by Lord Soper between 1974 and 1978, described him as "one of this century's outstanding campaigners for social justice".

Obituary, page 17

SOPERISMS

On Christians: "I would infinitely rather have been a born-again communist than a born-again Christian."

On wickedness: "There isn't a state in the world that isn't wicked. There isn't a single one in this crowd who isn't wicked. I'm trying not to look particularly in certain directions."

On how he would spend his last day on Earth: "By making arrangements for my trip to the other world. This world is an ante-room to a world which is ampler and wider."

On proof of the afterlife: "Of course I haven't any proof of anything. I haven't even any proof that you're there or all there. But I assume it."

On God: "Think what God does to a garden when left to himself."

On sin: "Talking about Christianity without saying anything about sin is like rather like discussing gardening without saying anything about weeds."

On being asked "Is God dead?" "I hadn't heard that God was unwell."

On faith: "Faith is a matter of will rather than a matter of contemplation."

On moving on: "To let bygones be bygones is not a confession of failure, it is the only way forward."

On Christianity: "The Christian faith is an effort we have to make upon evidence which is insufficient to give us absolute proof."



Lord Soper was regarded as the last great open-air preacher of the 20th century

NEWS IN BRIEF

Judge calls halt to Tube strike

Rail union leaders were ordered by a High Court judge last night to call off a 24-hour strike expected to halt public transport in London on New Year's Eve.

Mr Justice Sullivan ruled that the planned action on London Underground was likely to be unlawful. The RMT union agreed to write to 7,000 members telling them the action is off.

London Transport managers had said that if the Tube did not run, overcrowding would make it dangerous to operate buses. Managers had applied for the injunction, claiming that the mandate for the strike was a ballot of union members conducted in June and talks that had since taken place had not been referred to members.

Fluoride plea

Fluoride could be added to all public water supplies under proposals today by Water UK, the umbrella body for suppliers. It is urging the Public Health Minister to change the law to make local health authorities responsible for deciding whether to add it to supplies. At present, they can ask for fluoridation but water companies have the final say.

Computer fears

MPs on the Commons Transport Select Committee called on the Government yesterday to disclose by October those airports and airlines that had not updated their computer systems for the millennium. It also praised efforts being made by aviation, rail and shipping authorities and companies to ensure that computer problems are minimised.

Tin mine saved

A deal has been struck to buy Europe's last tin mine, South Crofty, near Redruth in Cornwall, closed in March with the loss of 300 jobs. The Welsh mining entrepreneur Wilf Hughes said he was buying the mine for £625,000 "to put Cornish tin back in the world market". About 25 men would be employed almost immediately and more taken on later.

Next, please

An armed bank robber fled empty-handed when he discovered that his target had turned into a doctor's surgery 18 months earlier. He walked into the building in Mossley, Greater Manchester, and pointed a pistol at a 43-year-old receptionist, only to be told that the Barclays bank was now the Pennine Medical Centre. He fled on a motorcycle.

Lawrences use TV for race plea

BY STEWART TENDLER, CRIME CORRESPONDENT

AN alternative televised Christmas message by the parents of Stephen Lawrence, the murdered teenager, will urge the Government to curb racism and the police to weed out bad officers.

The message from Doreen and Neville Lawrence, whose son was stabbed to death at a bus stop in South London, will be broadcast on Channel 4 at the same time as the Queen's message. It follows a five-year tradition by the channel to break away from the annual royal broadcast.

The Nevilles will take part in the brief programme which will also show Mr Neville at their son's old school and excerpts from the inquiry into their son's death chaired by Sir William Macpherson.

Yesterday, Channel 4 released part of the text of the broadcast. Mrs Lawrence will say it is a great honour to make the programme but she would forgo the privilege to have her son still alive, "to be able to hold him, embrace him and to see his face".

She says that the inquiry has offered a chance for change and the Government must not pay lip service like the previous Conservative government but put into place new anti-racist legislation.

Her husband says that recommendations from the inquiry should be monitored to ensure they are working.

JP gave thieves 'shopping list' of clothes and perfume

BY PAUL WILKINSON

A MAGISTRATE who worked for the Employment Service was yesterday convicted of encouraging thieves to shoplift for him.

Thomas Brown asked criminals to steal at the same time as he sat as a JP in North Tyneside Magistrates' Court.

Brown, 51, gave the thieves a list of smart clothes and designer perfumes for his wife and daughter. He then bought the goods knowing that they were stolen from local stores, Newcastle Crown Court was told.

He was exposed after an undercover police operation in which he was filmed buying coats, perfume and make-up worth almost £800 from informers. He had paid them just £145. Brown had denied charges of attempting to handle stolen goods and incitement to steal. His wife, Heather, 46, was convicted of attempting to handle stolen goods but cleared of incitement to steal. Their daughter Leah, 20, was cleared of attempting to handle stolen goods.

David Hodson, the Recorder, told Brown: "You must appreciate that, because of the nature of this conviction and your public office, the overwhelming likelihood is a substantial sentence of imprisonment."

Tim Gittens, for the prosecution, told the jury that in November last year Brown spoke to two people at his home in North Shields, not knowing they were police informants, wearing hidden recording equipment. "The informants were given a shopping list of items from Mr Brown to steal for him. The requests were quite specific and they knew the items they were going to receive were stolen goods."

When the informants returned Mrs Brown tried on two coats and purchased two boxes of Clinique perfume and an Armani aftershave gift-set. After her arrest she claimed that she had bought the goods on shopping trips over several months.

The Browns will be sentenced at a later date.

Dobson reveals rural care plans

BY IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

FRANK DOBSON plans to streamline health services in rural areas by concentrating them in certain centres.

The Health Secretary's strategy emerged from his decision broadly to back East Kent Health Authority's plan to downgrade Kent and Canterbury Hospital and set up haemophilia and renal services covering the county. He has ordered that Accident and Emergency care be looked at from an East Kent perspective. The plan is likely to be a blueprint for reorganisation elsewhere.

His decision follows prolonged wrangling between the authority and campaigners against plans to reduce the status of the hospital from acute to district. Thousands marched through Canterbury, and forced the authority to amend to 232 the projected number of beds after it said this would be reduced from 480 to 65.

Mr Dobson has insisted that the authority provide daytime consultants at the hospital for anaesthetics, surgery and medicine, in charge of Accident and Emergency. Certain patients will have to go to hospitals at Ashford or Margate, rather than Canterbury.

Last night, the hospital's medical staff met to consider their response. Chris Ryan, the hospital spokesman, said Mr Dobson's decision would mean an end to its role as a major training centre.

THE MAGNET SALE STARTS BOXING DAY

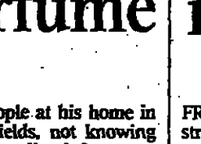
(ALL THE SERVICE, HALF THE PRICE* ON ALL KITCHEN & BEDROOM CABINETS)



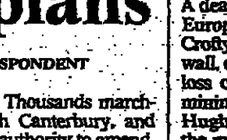
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*Discounts on retail kitchen and bedroom cabinets are off prices charged between 22nd November and 26th December 1998.

T113A

Jury clears Bill star who acted over drug fears

TV detective tells of desperate search to find missing daughter, reports Sue Lappeman

THE actor William Murray, a star of *The Bill*, has been cleared of a vigilante-style attack on two men whom he believed were supplying drugs to his 14-year-old daughter.

A jury took 90 minutes to clear Mr Murray, 52, of two counts of assault and another charge of causing affray after a six-day trial at Basildon Crown Court, Essex.

After the verdict Mr Murray warned other parents about the danger of drugs: "They are in all the schools, even the so-called posh schools. There is a problem here and we have to deal with it in the best way we can."

The actor, who plays Detective Sergeant Don Beech in the ITV drama, was accused of beating up Brian Basquill, 23, and Andrew Joyce, 20, in Brentwood in March after bursting into Mr Basquill's flat with three other men in search of his daughter.

Outside the court he hugged his wife, Elaine, 46, as jury members filed past him, shaking his hand and wishing him a merry Christmas. Mr Murray, who has four children, said: "This has been a nightmare. All I want now is to get down to enjoying Christmas. Parents should always be vigilant, not vigilante, when it comes to drugs.

"It must be the fear of every parent out there and I know the problems they can get into. I did things the only way I knew how. I was working with the police to find her. The police have been wonderful."

During the trial Mr Murray wept as he told how, late last year, his teenage daughter had started staying out all night and lying to him and his wife about being at friends' homes. The couple then found her diary, in which she talked of "getting stoned" and "od'g" (overdosing) at "Joycey's".

Mr Murray said he and his wife had been convinced that their daughter was staying at Mr Joyce's bedsit and Mr Basquill's flat and had made repeated visits there in an attempt to find her.

Mr Murray said that he had been unwell with a mouth abscess and cracked collarbone and would have been unable to hit anyone on the day of the alleged assaults. He said that he had gone to Mr Basquill's flat looking for his daughter and had found three men he did not know already there.

He said that he did not see any violence, was not responsible for organising an attack and had no involvement of any kind. A policeman told the court that he had seen Mr Murray and three men at a nearby flat earlier that day acting "agitated" and "uptight" and looking for Mr Murray's daughter, who cannot be named for legal reasons.

Mr Murray admitted visiting another flat in the area that day while searching for his daughter but said that he had been alone. He said that he had met another three men, whom he did not know, on the doorstep by coincidence.

A spokesman for *The Bill* said yesterday: "We're very pleased and looking forward to seeing Billy back at work."

Mr Murray was earlier cleared of intimidating Mr Joyce in an attempt to have the assault charge dropped. Judge Peter Thompson ruled that there was insufficient evidence.



JOHN MCLELLAN

William Murray and his wife, Elaine, celebrate the jury's verdict outside Basildon Crown Court yesterday

Krays saved actor from life of crime

BY A CORRESPONDENT

GROWING up in the East End of London, William Murray was heading for a life of crime until he was given the chance to go straight by, of all people, the Krays.

The brothers gave him £400 to pay for drama school. He went on to become a successful actor, with roles in *Rock Follies* and the film *McVicar* before landing the part of Detective Sergeant Don Beech in *The Bill* five years ago.

Last year Mr Murray repaid his debt to the Krays by acting as a character witness for Charlie, who was jailed for the attempted supply of more than £38 million of cocaine.

Mr Murray was born in Forest Gate in October 1946, the son of an Irish builder turned bouncer. He was a schoolboy boxing champion and, as a teenager, was part of a gang regularly involved in violence. He worked as a shelf stacker in a supermarket and a docker after leaving school.

Much of his time was spent in snooker halls, boxing gyms, pubs and night clubs, including the Double R in Bow Road, which was owned by the Kray twins, Ronnie and Reggie.

He has said that he spent "loads of nights" in prison as a result of getting into fights in his youth. His life changed in his early 20s when one of his friends was jailed for 15 years for armed robbery. The friend wrote to him from his cell in Durham jail warning him that he could end up there unless he changed his ways. "He was the reason I became an actor."

Bail for killers awaiting appeal

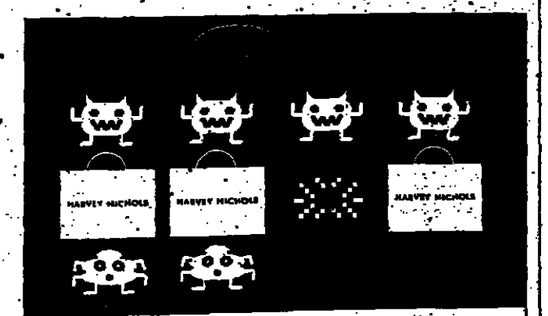
BY STEWART TENDLER
CRIME CORRESPONDENT

THREE men jailed for robbing and killing a Cardiff newsagent have been released on bail pending an appeal.

Michael O'Brien, now 29, and Ellis Sherwood and Darren Hall, both 28, were given life imprisonment for the murder of Philip Saunders in 1988. The case was referred back to the Court of Appeal after a study by the Criminal Cases Review Commission. Mr Justice Hooper released the three on sureties of £5,000 on Monday. Their lawyers said he had emphasised that the granting of bail did not necessarily mean they would be cleared.

The evidence on which they were convicted included an alleged confession by Hall after he had been interviewed 12 times by police, often without a solicitor. Hall admitted manslaughter but his plea was not accepted. The new evidence includes a statement from Hall that he lied because he wanted "to be someone".

The appeal will be heard next year.



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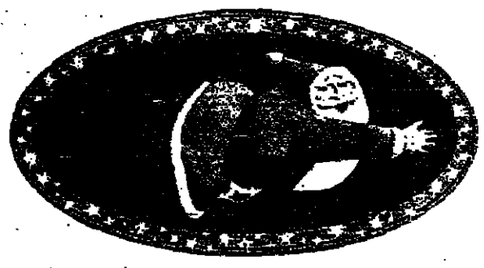
	Knightsbridge	Leeds
Sunday 27 December	12pm - 6pm	11am - 5pm
Monday 28 December	10am - 8pm	9am - 7pm
Tuesday 29 December	10am - 8pm	9am - 7pm
Wednesday 30 December	10am - 8pm	9am - 7pm
Thursday 31 December	10am - 6pm	9am - 5pm
Friday 1 January	12pm - 6pm	Closed
Saturday 2 January	10am - 7pm	9am - 7pm

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Experts divided over listing of 'eyesore' blocks

BY ADRIAN LEE

MODERN buildings, including 1960s council estates condemned as eyesores by their tenants, were given listed status yesterday by the Government.

The awards, which recognise design, decoration and craftsmanship, represent the culmination of a seven-year project to protect outstanding postwar landmarks. Buildings in new towns, such as Harlow and Welwyn Garden City, are listed along with the centre of Stevenage in Hertfordshire. They are now regarded as being among the top 2 per cent of all the nation's buildings.

The decision to include the sprawling Park Hill estate in Sheffield, making it Britain's largest listed building, astounded many of its 2,000 residents, who have nicknamed it San Quentin, after the prison.

Among the 28 listings announced by Alan Howarth, the Arts Minister, were Trellick Tower, in Kensington, West London, and five blocks on the Alton Estate in Roehampton, southwest London.

The long battle to list them has provoked fierce criticism from traditionalists, who claim that few properties built in the 1950s and 1960s merit conservation because they were poorly built and are not models for the future.

A member of the steering group that recommended the buildings admitted that he had no particular fondness for several. Gavin Stamp, a historian and lecturer at the Mackintosh School of Architecture in Glasgow, said: "There are some of these things I don't like but that is not the point.

"For example I wish Park Hill had never been built, but it was and it is much better to live with it. These buildings are all a very important part of modern architectural history."

Mr Stamp hoped the awards would lead to regeneration of tower blocks and estates such as Park Hill. He was generous in his praise for the Trellick Tower, which had "sublime grandeur". "If you are going to build a tower block that is the way to do it. It is solidly built, not just a box."

But the listings were condemned by Dr David Watkin, reader in architectural history at Cambridge University. "I am out of sympathy with listing modern buidings. They should be recorded and demolished, not preserved.

"Many of these buildings were experimental and were never intended to be long term. This does damage to our heritage: many examples of modern architecture are manifestly unsuccessful." However, Sir Jocelyn Stevens, chairman of English Heritage, said that the listing of postwar buildings gave them "the status and protection they deserve as the best of their kind and as landmarks of our time. They remind us that England's proud tradition of architectural heritage did not end in 1945."

He said that the estates chosen were, in their time, symbols of great local and national pride and that there had been wide public consultation.

The announcements bring the number of postwar listed buildings to 300, out of a total of 400,000 listed buildings.

LISTED BUILDINGS

Public sector housing

Grade II*: Bevin Court, Islington; Spa Green, Islington; Park Hill Estate, Sheffield; Lillington Gardens (phases I and II), Pimlico, London; Trellick Tower, Kensington and Chelsea; Alton Estate, Roehampton (five slab blocks)

Grade II: Alton Estate, Roehampton (10 blocks and bungalows); Churchill Gardens, Pimlico, 1-57 Lammas Green, Sydenham Hill, Lewisham, Sulkin and Trevelyan Houses, Greenways Estate, Tower Hamlets, East London, Wyndham Court, Southampton; Passfields, Bellingham, London

New town housing

Grade II: The Lawn, Harlow, Essex, Orchard Croft, Harlow; 82-124 and 83-125 Knightsfield, Welwyn Garden City; Brooke House, Basildon; Point Royal, Bracknell; 23-79 The Ryde, Hatfield.

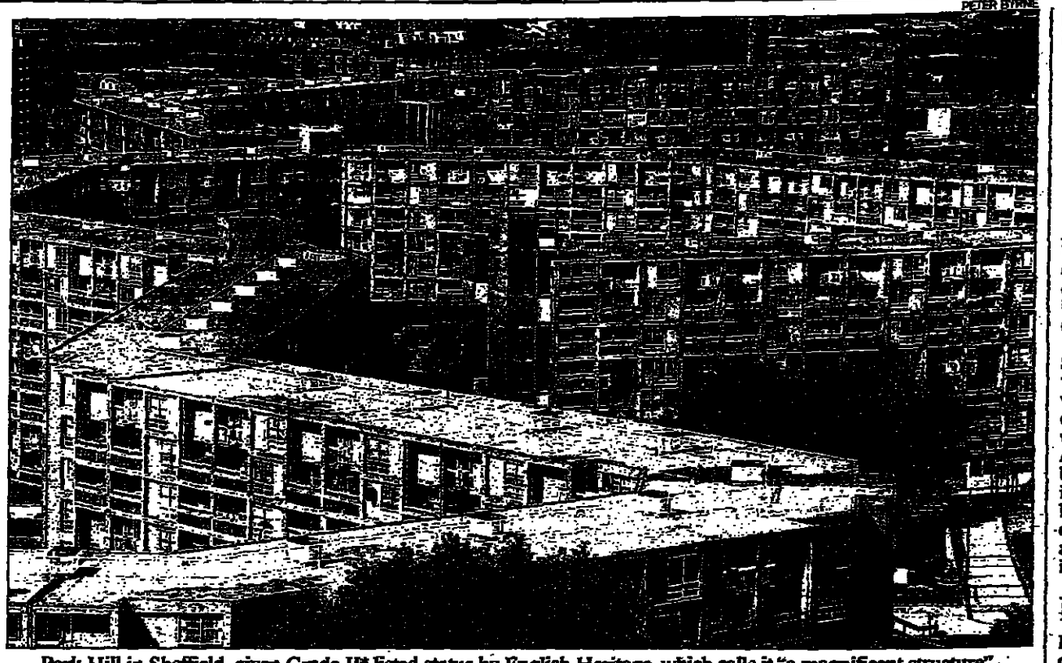
Private and charitable housing

Grade II*: 26 St James' Place, Westminster

Grade II: 1-30 Langham House Close, Ham Common, Richmond; 10 Regent's Park Road, Camden; Parkleys, Ham Common; 1-26 Hallgate, Blackheath; The Quadrangle, Highsett, Cambridge; 2, 3 & 4 Poplar Meadow, Rushbrooke, Suffolk; 1-17 The Hamlet, Rushbrooke.

Planned town centres

Grade II: Clock tower and raised pool, Stevenage



PETER BYRNE

Park Hill in Sheffield, given Grade II* listed status by English Heritage, which calls it "a magnificent structure"

Bulldoze it, say residents of Grade II* estate

BY PAUL WILKINSON

AS conservationists lauded the addition of a 1950s estate of concrete inner-city tower blocks to Britain's list of historic buildings yesterday the residents called it a "rundown dump that needs bulldozing".

English Heritage, which says that the Park Hill estate in Sheffield is an architectural masterpiece, has awarded it Grade II* listed status. Martin Cherry, head of listing, described the flats, on a hilltop overlooking central Sheffield, as a "magnificent structure".

The listing places Park Hill in the top 2 per cent of important buildings, with designs such as Woburn Abbey. It is Britain's largest modern listed building. Dr Cherry said: "Park Hill has been likened to a medieval fortress, a glittering cliff-face of windows."

But many of the 2,000 tenants were incredulous that anyone could find beauty in an estate dubbed "streets in the sky" when it opened because of its wide galleried walkways that attempted to replicate terraced Victorian streets it replaced. They call it San Quentin after the prison.

It is ravaged by graffiti, deliverymen often have to dodge milk bottles and other missiles thrown from the high-level walkways and some residents throw their rubbish, including furniture, over the edge.

Michael Pemberton, 58, a resident for 14 years, said: "It's an eyesore and the best thing they can do is blow up the lot. There are a lot of decent families but there are also a lot of prostitutes, drug addicts and scum."

David Brooke, 56, a father of three, was among the first to move in in 1960. He said: "It was great at first. But over the years it has gone downhill.

"The council ought to bulldoze the complex and build some proper houses instead."

The estate was the first of its kind in the country and was hailed as the perfect solution to housing problems, creating a whole community of flats, shops, pubs and other amenities. It was designed by Jack Lynn and Ivor Smith, working for Lewis Womersley of Sheffield Corporation. Europe copied the idea but by the 1970s Park Hill had become nearslums and other blocks near by were demolished.

The listing means Sheffield Council must preserve the estate but it should get £6-million lottery money for a facelift. Up to £20 million is being spent on repairs and refitting.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Disabled sprinter wins £1.5m

A former Olympic sprinter has been awarded £1.5 million in damages after a nine-hour operation on a leg injury suffered in a car crash left him brain damaged and semi-paralysed.

Lawyers for Cameron Sharp, 38, a former Commonwealth Games gold medallist, who is married with two daughters, agreed the payout with North Cumbria Health Authority, which admitted liability. The operation took place in Cumberland Infirmary, Carlisle, in 1991. The award includes £100,000 for injuries and the rest for loss of earnings and the cost of care.

Players in court

Neil Ruddock and Trevor Sinclair, of West Ham United, appeared before magistrates in Havering, East London, charged respectively with affray and criminal damage. A youth worker is also charged in connection with an alleged incident after a club party.

Tesco cleared

An employment tribunal in Leicester dismissed allegations by Nadeem Sikander, a former employee of Tesco in Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire, that white staff discriminated against Asians. He had claimed constructive dismissal and racial discrimination.

Accidental SOS

A rescue helicopter was scrambled after a satellite distress beacon accidentally went off in a ferry worker's van and its signal was picked up by the US Coastguard. After a two-hour search it was traced to the home of Simon Wilds, 27, in Weymouth, Dorset.

Flyhalf banned

Simon Mannix, 27, the Gloucester flyhalf and former All Black, was banned from driving for 16 months and fined £500 by Cheltenham magistrates after he moved his car from double yellow lines to avoid a parking ticket when he was over the alcohol limit.

CORRECTION

A memorial concert for the victims of the Lockerbie disaster (report, yesterday) was held in Westminster Cathedral and not, as wrongly stated in a caption to a photograph, Westminster Abbey. A service of remembrance was held in the Abbey.

Helping the cheetah to cheat extinction

FROM SAM KILEY IN THE SERENGETI, TANZANIA

THE TIMES CHRISTMAS APPEAL

TWO pre-adolescent male cheetah cubs lay basking in the shade of an acacia tree, their bellies bulging with impala recently killed. Near by their mother nursed another cub, its bones showing through its haunches, its two front paws swollen into livid clubs of fur.

Florence, a ten-year-old subject in the Serengeti's Cheetah Project, the longest-running study of the species in the world, represents a 200th of the huge park's total cheetah population. The mysterious infection in the feet of her smallest cub forced its claws to stick out at agonising angles.

Sarah Durant, a Briton who heads the project, was mystified, then visibly shaken when the other two cubs stood up, revealing identical infections in their front left paws.

"I've never seen anything like this before," she whispered to Morris Kilewa, one of the Tanzania national park's two veterinary surgeons who cover the entire country. Neither had Dr Kilewa.

In a wildebeest, buffalo, zebra or any of the plentiful antelope that roam the Serengeti's plains and woodlands, such an infection would be a passing curiosity, if it were noticed at all.

But among the cheetah, which number about 10,000 worldwide and are classified as "vulnerable" to extinction, a new or previously unknown disease could spell catastrophe. "I'll need to get some advice about this," said Dr Durant, 35, a Cambridge graduate who has dedicated the past seven years to the Serengeti cheetah. "We may have to immobilise them and take some blood and tissue samples. It's very strange."

At the back of her mind is the fear of an epidemic like the canine distemper that killed a third of the park's lions in 1994. Such a disease would spell the end of the Serengeti's cheetah. If this infection continued to spread, or took a permanent hold on Florence's six-month-old litter, they were unlikely to survive. That would add to the mystery of why three previous litters made it to "independence" at 18 months then vanished, possibly killed by lion or leopard, starved, gored in a hunt, or taken by disease.



Cheetah cubs may not survive independence

Dr Durant and her newly arrived research assistant, Tom Maddox, 23, a biology graduate from Durham University soon to embark on a doctorate, run the Serengeti Cheetah Project. In two elderly Land Rovers they range over the park, trying to monitor the cheetah and looking for clues as to how the species could be viable well into the next century. Based at the "cheetah house" at Seronera in the middle of the Serengeti, they live on a frugal diet of spaghetti and vegetables. Their roof leaks, they have no running water and meagre electricity from a solar panel.

The 23-year-old project needs £85,000 to keep going in 1999. The Serengeti team has raised £15,000. We have made the project one of the three charities in *The Times* Christmas Appeal. Chief among their needs is to employ a Tanzanian researcher, who will need a Land Rover to monitor cheetah populations elsewhere in the country and add to knowledge and experience of local scientists. Many cheetah are doing better than Florence's cubs. Many are not. Without research, this unique species could disappear from the Serengeti before anyone is able to discover why.

Cheetah Project Appeal

I wish to donate £ _____ to the Zoological Society of London, Cheetah Project Appeal. Method of payment (please tick box)
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Please make cheques payable to Zoological Society of London Cheetah Project Appeal, or charge Visa/MasterCard/Amex no:

Expiry date _____ Today's date _____
Signature _____
Name _____
Address _____
_____ Postcode _____

To make an instant credit-card donation, phone 0171-449 6499, Mon-Fri 10am-5pm, or send this coupon with your donation to: Zoological Society of London, Cheetah Project Appeal, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY.
Registered Charity no 208728. If more than the Christmas Appeal target is raised, funds will go directly to other conservation projects run by the Zoological Society of London.
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Burrell's ally tells of ordeal at Diana fund

By Michael Harvey

THE Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund was attacked by one of its staff yesterday for failing to support Paul Burrell, the Princess's former butler.

Jacqueline Allen said that it was tragic that Mr Burrell had lost his job as fundraising events manager. Miss Allen, 35, worked for the Princess as a secretary at Kensington Palace for nine months before being taken on by the fund with Mr Burrell after her death.

Miss Allen and Mr Burrell were deeply affected by the Princess's death. Miss Allen had telephoned him after the Paris car crash to tell him that the Princess had died.

Yesterday Miss Allen, the fund's events and namings manager, said: "I think the public knows how much Paul has given to the fund. We were the only two members of staff to have worked for the Princess and I think Paul brought an awful lot to the fund. I just think it is tragic that he is no longer with it."

When asked if she would continue to work for it, she replied: "I think it is debatable. It is going to be discussed.

"I wonder when Paul and I are going to wake up from this nightmare that started 16 months ago.

"Ever since the Princess died Paul and I have been put in the most awful position and it just seems to continue. We have never had any support and I think someone should just look at what especially Paul, but both of us, have actually been through."



Allen: she and Burrell "were not supported"

Mr Burrell, whom the Princess had described as her rock, became the public face of the fund. He said that the job was his way of continuing to care for the Princess and her legacy.

The charity made him redundant after deciding to rule out active fundraising, leaving him with no role to play. Andrew Purkis, the chief executive of the fund, offered Mr Burrell a post as a roving ambassador for the fund working for other charities but he turned that down.

A source close to the trustees said: "Paul will be missed. He is a great guy but in the end a charity cannot afford to go on paying someone's salary if there is little for them to do."

The fund had initially denied reports that he was to go but then announced his redundancy last weekend. Yesterday Mr Burrell, 40, cleared his belongings at the fund's offices at County Hall, near Waterloo. Looking tearful, he emerged and hugged Miss Allen. He would only say: "I feel very sad," before being driven away.

A Christmas lunch for fund staff that had been organised for yesterday by Mr Burrell was cancelled on Monday.

Last night Mr Burrell was with his wife and sons at home in Cheshire, considering his future. He is said to be angry at his treatment. He leaves the fund with a pay-off of about £3,000.

A fund spokeswoman declined to comment on Miss Allen's comments.

ADRIAN SHERRATT



Paul Burrell, former butler to Diana, Princess of Wales, leaves the memorial fund after clearing his desk yesterday

999 crew 'read map for route to hospital'

AN AMBULANCEMAN and two managers have been disciplined after the death of a pensioner who, his widow said, was left gasping for breath while the crew consulted a map and debated which hospital to take him to.

Norman Roberts, 77, had a heart attack at his home in Old Trafford. He died shortly after arriving at Trafford General Hospital. His wife, Sara, complained that he could have been taken to a closer hospital. She also said that the ambulanceman and woman had refused to turn on emergency sirens and failed to find a needle necessary to treat him.

After a third inquiry into the incident Mrs Roberts received a letter which said the male crew member had been found to have been neglectful in his duties and had received a written warning. The woman was cleared because it was felt that she should have been offered assistance by her more experienced colleague. Two operational managers were also given written warnings, understood to be for failing to handle the complaint adequately.



Boris is scheduled for an operation on his eyes next month

Operation will make Boris eagle-eyed

By Nick Nuttall, Environment Correspondent

A RARE Siberian eagle owl is to have pioneering surgery in an attempt to save its sight.

Boris, which is blind in both eyes because of cataracts, faced being put down. But the owners of a sanctuary in Cornwall who appealed two weeks ago for funds to save the bird said they now had enough for the operation. So much money has been given by wellwishers that there may be enough to pay for a mate to be flown from Russia.

Boris, 20 years old, is one of only two Siberian eagle owls in captivity in Britain and one of five in Europe. The worldwide population numbers about 200 pairs.

The operation is to be carried out by Paul Evans, a vet specialising in eye conditions. Mr Evans, who owns the Eye Veterinary Clinic in Hereford, said yesterday that the operation involved making a tiny incision in the bird's 14mm by 7mm oval lens. A device spinning at 40,000 rpm is inserted, turning the solid cataract into a liquid in a process known as phaco-emulsification. The offending material is then sucked out.

The technique is routine for cats and dogs — much less so for birds. To date it has been successfully used on a peregrine falcon, a little owl and a white-breasted eagle.

Mr Evans has contacted 200 veterinary ophthalmologists in other countries to see if there have been any other cases of the species having cataracts. If, as he suspects, the cataracts are due to ageing rather than genes, the operation is expected to go ahead on January 26.

Boris was taken in by the Screech Owl Sanctuary, on Goss Moor, Cornwall, because his elderly owner was unable to afford the operation and care costs. Tom and Carolyn Screech, the sanctuary's owners, launched the appeal for £2,000 to restore Boris's sight because he could live for another 50 years and breed for 20 or 25 of them.

Mrs Screech said yesterday she was amazed at the response to the appeal. "The money has been raised for the operation, and we are hoping to hear from the vet in Hereford that it can take place."

She said Boris had become "a bit of star" at the sanctuary, which attracts around 20,000 visitors a year and where the 97 owls of 27 species can be handled by visitors.

The search for a possible mate is likely to centre on two zoos in Russia, one of which is in Moscow, where between six and eight Siberian eagle owls are understood to be held. It is hoped that with the agreement of appeal donors, surplus cash will be used to buy equipment for the zoo in exchange for a mate for Boris.

Blackbird top of flocks

By John Vincent

THE blackbird is the most commonly seen species in British gardens on Christmas Day, according to a computer analysis of observations by 10,000 ornithologists.

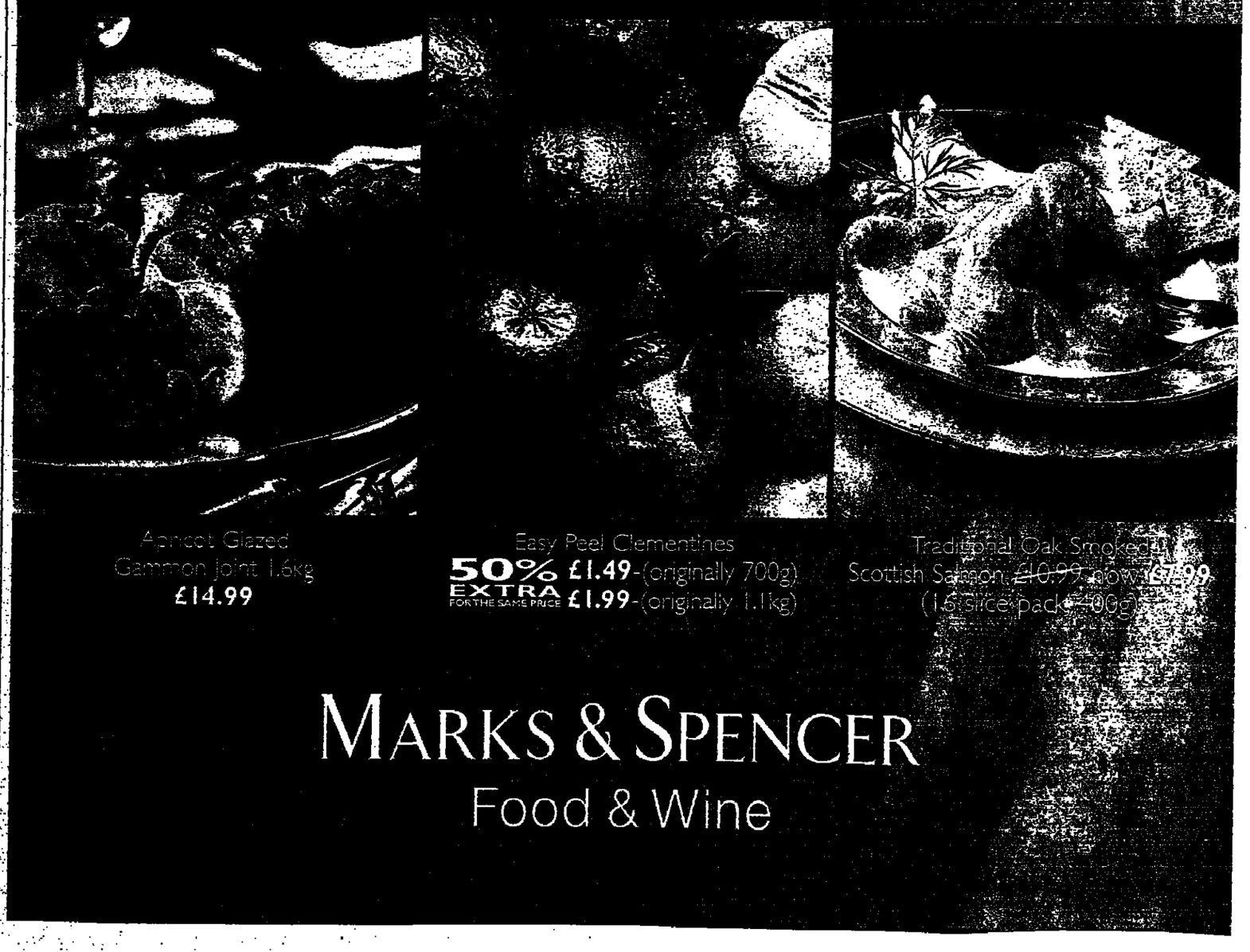
Last year it was seen in 96.4 per cent of gardens and is expected to remain ahead of the flock this year too.

The other most commonly sighted birds are blue tit (seen in 96.1 per cent of gardens over Christmas), robin (91.7 per cent), great tit (82.1 per cent), chaffinch (79.2 per cent), house sparrow (now down at number six with 78.7 per cent), collared dove (75.4 per cent), dunnock (74.7 per cent), starling (74.4 per cent) and greenfinch (73.7 per cent).

Other species likely to be seen in more than 50 per cent of gardens on Christmas Day are the magpie and coal tit.

The chart was compiled by Andrew Cannon, head of the British Trust for Ornithology's birdwatch scheme.

'tis the season to be jolly.



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MARKS & SPENCER
Food & Wine

Omagh survivor goes home for Christmas

Martin Fletcher on a bitter-sweet day for a woman who lost her baby

THE last survivor of the Omagh bombing left hospital yesterday to spend Christmas with her family.

Tracey Devine, who lost her 18-month-old daughter, Breda, in the blast, has waited four months to return to her husband, Paul, and their three surviving children at their home near Strabane.

"It's been a long hard struggle but I've got over the worst. I'm very, very lucky to be alive," said Mrs Devine, who must wear a plastic mask and pressure bandages over much of her upper body for the next 18 months.

Mrs Devine, 27, was standing just yards from the explosion, which killed 29 people and injured 250. She, her brother Garry and his fiancée, Donna Marie Keyes, had been buying shoes for Breda, who was to be flower girl at Garry's wedding the following week.

"I remember it going bang and getting up and looking for Breda," she said. She saw Donna Marie lying beside her but could not find her baby.

She was taken to the Co Tyrone Hospital on a public bus. "I knew I was wounded but I didn't know how badly burnt I was," she said. From there she was flown by helicopter to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast, where doctors gave her a 30 per cent chance of survival. She had suffered burns to two thirds of her body, as well as serious head injuries, broken bones and blast damage to her lungs.

> ‘It's been a long, hard struggle but I've got over the worst. I'm very, very lucky to be alive’

Mrs Devine underwent 40 hours of plastic surgery andit was only after six weeks under sedation in intensive care that her husband told her of Breda's death. She was already depressed and the news "set back the healing process", she said.

This month she has been allowed home for two weekends. On the first she visited Breda's grave. On the second she steeled herself to walk down Omagh's Market Street, where workmen were filling in the bomb crater.

Mrs Devine said that she was thrilled to be going home to her other children, aged two to six, but that Christmas and her brother's wedding — now in March — would be bittersweet. None of Breda's things have been touched. "Every time you turn around you see something that belonged to her," Mr Devine said.

Mrs Devine was one of 29 people taken to the Royal Victoria. They were the most critically injured in the blast but 27 survived. "I'm only alive because of the staff at Tyrone County and here. They have just been great," she said.

☐ The RUC has stopped excavating an embankment in West Belfast after an unsuccessful search for the remains of John McClory and Brian McKinney, who were believed to have been murdered by the IRA in 1978.

☐ Four IRA terrorists convicted of murdering two Irish policemen in the 1980s were released from Portlaoise prison near Dublin under the terms of the Good Friday peace accord yesterday. In Northern Ireland Geraldine Ferrity, leader of the IRA's women prisoners in Maghaberry jail, was freed after serving eight years of a life sentence for murder.

JOHN GILES



Tracey Devine with her husband, Paul. The news of their daughter's death set back the healing process, she said

...the twins want to sing 'Silent Night' for you...

...I'll go and get Mum...

...what do you mean you're not having turkey?

...no Vicky's down south, but John's here...

...little Sean wants to tell you about his new bike...

...just a mo, Susie's somewhere...

...say hello to your cousin Sal...

...I'll go and wake up your Dad...

...hang on, Gran's coming to the phone...

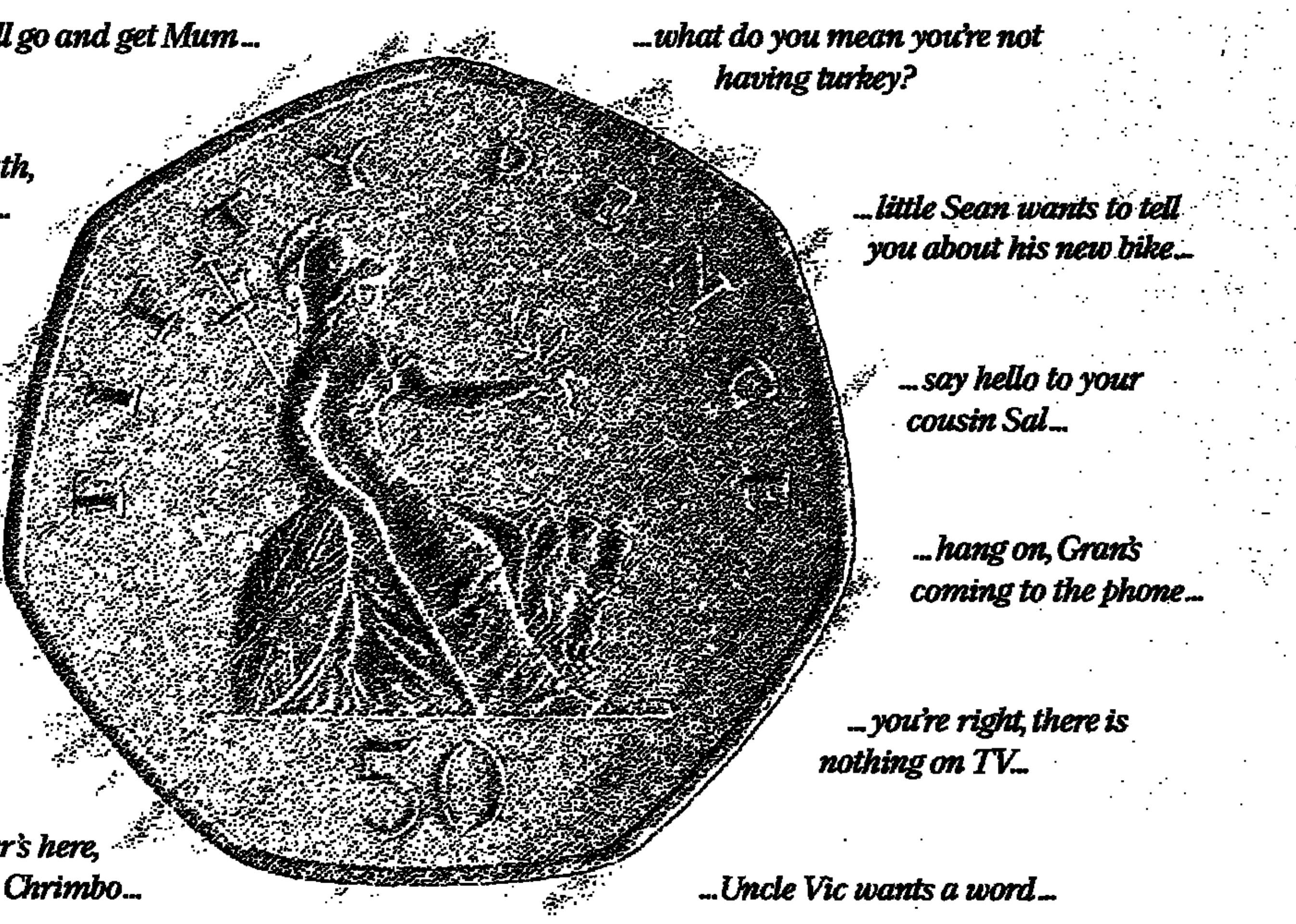
...I'm handing you over to Uncle Peter...

...you're right, there is nothing on TV...

...your brother's here, wish him Happy Chrimbo...

...Uncle Vic wants a word...

...I'll drag Aunt Em away from the washing up...



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Charity attacks sale of tobacco label goods

By A Correspondent

A CANCER charity has written to store groups urging them to stop selling tobacco-branded goods such as watches and clothing.

The Roy Castle Lung Cancer Federation, set up in memory of the performer who died from the disease, appealed to the chairmen of Harrods, Allders, House of Fraser, John Lewis, Debenhams and Selfridges not to sell the products carrying logos such as Camel and Marlboro.

Sylvia Ingham, the charity's chief executive, said: "Almost one in five of 11 to 15-year-olds owns an item of clothing with a cigarette logo and 49 per cent are already so addicted they would find it hard to go without smoking for just one day."

In her letter to the store chiefs she said: "Most people take up smoking as children when they are more easily hooked and too young to make informed choices about tobacco use. In your stores you may unwittingly be contributing to the problem by stocking tobacco branded goods which will be of very high quality. The goods may be prestigious but the industry they are promoting is not."

Scientists lose contact with Eros spacecraft

By Nigel Hawkes
Science Editor

SCIENTISTS are struggling to regain contact with a spacecraft due to rendezvous with an asteroid in deep space in the new year.

Contact with the Near Earth Asteroid Rendezvous (Near) spacecraft was lost soon after its rockets were fired to bring it to a meeting with Eros, an asteroid the size of Central London, on January 10.

A signal was detected on Monday and ground controllers were yesterday waiting for data from the craft that might indicate what had gone wrong. "Everybody will hold their breath until we get the data back," said Helen Worth, spokeswoman for the team at the Applied Physics Laboratory of Johns Hopkins University in Maryland, which is responsible for the mission. The date for the rendezvous has been put back to February.

Near is the first mission to send a probe to take a close look at an asteroid. After reaching Eros the plan was to orbit it for a year, analysing its make-up and possibly attempting a landing. Mission staff are working around the clock to try to find out what has gone wrong.

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(without Cashcard)	8.00%	7.25%	7.72%	7.02%
(with Cashcard)	7.50%	6.75%	7.25%	6.55%

Christmas makes defiant return to festive Hanoi

Communism failed to crush the Catholic Church, writes David Watts

BY 6.30 on a pre-Christmas Hanoi morning, the cathedral is packed and the priest is well into his sermon. Crouching in the doorway trying to blend in are four security policemen in smart black bomber jackets. They listen intently to the purple-robed priest for any sign of deviation from communist orthodoxy.

On the streets of once austere Hanoi, Christmas masks with the wispy beard of Ho Chi Minh are all the rage. Fashionable young women, perched on the back of Piaggio scooters and twittering into mobile telephones, are delivered to Cathedral Square by their boyfriends in a city where love and religion were once taboo.

In Ho Chi Minh City, Baskin Robbins' ice cream parlour snow scene looks incongruous in the semi-tropical heat, but hardly out of place in the post-communist Christmas bustle.

In the cathedral, Father Chan Tin and his priests have hundreds of the faithful at their weekday Christmas confessionals and hundreds of converts are being welcomed into the Church, despite increasing repression. The reason for the Government's paranoia is made manifest by the youthful congregations. Christianity is winning hearts and minds faster than the Government's flagging ideology.

"In the Church, they find love that they don't find in the Communist Party," said Father Chan, 78, his eyes twinkling with the fires of decades of struggle against governments communist and non-communist.

It seems he privately has plenty of senior Communist Party supporters. In the past year three top party men, all with at least 50 years' membership behind them, have publicly endorsed him. He attended the funeral of one, Nguyen Van Tran, aged 84, in May when he was forced off his scooter by plainclothes police.

The Communists put Father Chan under house arrest for three years in the early 1990s for demanding, from the pulpit, their repentance. He was cut off in a village, not allowed to preach or to have a telephone and made to report to the police every 15 days. Today his movements are scarcely any easier: he must have permission not only to leave his own diocese but also from the People's Committee of any town he wishes to visit.

The Government's strategy is clear — to smother the Church through lack of priests. Severe restrictions are placed on the number of priests who may be ordained and only 50 students may be taken into the two seminaries in Saigon and Hanoi at six-year intervals. Up to 30 priests each year die in Saigon's ten dioceses alone.

"They want to let the Church perish," said Father Chan. But he is optimistic: "The priests may be dying, but the religion is active. If I have to die for human rights, I will be happy. Now I'm 78 it is time to die. Now I think they have to tolerate me."

External pressure for greater religious freedom is increasing, espcially from the United States, and the Government responds sporadically, afraid of losing foreign funding. But Hanoi is still resisting the Pope's determination to visit the expanding flock of at least seven million Catholics. "But now they don't say 'never'," said Father Chan.

HOANG DINH NAM / AFP



Christmas hats and masks being offered for sale on a street in Hanoi yesterday

One in five still anti-Semitic in united Germany

FROM ROGER BOYES IN BONN

ABOUT 20 per cent of Germans are latently anti-Semitic, according to an opinion survey published today. The report coincides with a sharp increase in anti-Semitic crimes in Berlin — in particular, a bomb attack on the grave of one of the country's former leading Jewish representatives, Heinz Galinski.

The Forsa Institute survey asked dozens of questions about the power and influence of Jews, their characteristics, and for an assessment of which groups were attempting to gain advantage from Germany's wartime guilt.

Forsa, commissioned by *Die Woche* newspaper, found that anti-Semitic attitudes were evenly distributed among east and west Germans and that members of all political parties, not only the far Right, expressed some resentment of Jews. Forty-four per cent of all self-declared rightwingers emerged as anti-Semites, and 11 per cent of leftwingers.

The most anti-Semitic were those aged over 65. About 38 per cent of older Germans voiced some grudge against the Jews. Only 10 per cent of people aged between 14 and 25 made anti-Semitic views.

For 50 years, German educational curriculums have tried to present a fair picture of Jewish life in Germany before the Second World War and made clear the origins of the Holocaust. Yet there are remarkable gaps in German knowledge — many respondents in the Forsa survey believed there were five million Jews still living in the country. The true figure is around 70,000, many of them immigrants from Russia and Ukraine.

The far Right has been exploiting this ignorance, and newspapers and pamphlets come close to breaking German law by suggesting that the Holocaust has been exaggerated. Most Germans do not swallow this propaganda, but many believe that Germany no longer owes anything to the Jews.

The Berlin Senate estimates that anti-Semitic offences have increased in the city by 20 per cent over the past year. Last year 90 such offences were recorded by the police. Usually they amount to little more than graffiti, but the tone now has a nastier edge. This autumn neo-Nazis painted a Star of David on the back of a pig and chased it through Alexanderplatz, one of the main squares in east Berlin.

But it is the blowing up of Heinz Galinski's grave that has shocked liberal Germans. Galinski was leader of the Berlin Jewish community and did much to rebuild it. Police say the bomb — which exploded on Saturday night — was a powerful home-made device. It blew metal fragments over a radius of more than 130ft.

Search goes on for Chechnya bodies

FROM ANNA BLUNDY IN MOSCOW

THE bodies of the British telephone engineers beheaded by kidnappers in Chechnya this month have still not been recovered, and the severed heads of the men remain in a hospital mortuary in Grozny, the Chechen capital.

The British Embassy in Moscow is reluctant to send a representative to the area for what officials describe as "obvious reasons". Meanwhile, the ordeal of the men's relatives, who are desperate to bury them, continues. The families were reassured by the Foreign Office soon after the kidnappings on October 3 that no foreign hostages had been murdered in Chechnya, and hopes were high that the men would be home for Christmas.

But their heads were left in a sack by a roadside near the Chechen border with Ingushetia and the bodies of Darren Hickey, Rudolf Petschi, Peter Kennedy and New Zealander Stanley Shaw have not been found.

"Our understanding all along has been that the Chechens are doing all they can to return the bodies to Britain," said Mike Haddock, of the British Embassy in Moscow. He said the Chechen authorities viewed it as "a matter of honour" to find the bodies as soon as possible. Our main concern is for the psyche of the relatives," he said. "They are going through hell."

The breakaway Russian republic has been a no-go area for foreigners since the end of a bloody war of independence with Russia in 1996.

Authorities said yesterday they would not repatriate the severed heads until the rest of the remains were found.

Food of love cheers ducks

Beijing: Thousands of ducks at a farm in northeast China refused food and drink after staff separated the males from the females, the official media reported. The farm kept its 10,000 ducks together, but when the drakes were moved for greater efficiency the ducks started pining. They started eating and drinking when they were reunited with the drakes. *(AFP)*

Third dissident jailed in China

FROM JAMES PRINGLE IN BEIJING

FLYING in the face of strong Western criticism, China yesterday sentenced another political activist — the third in two days — to a long prison term on charges of subversion. It said no other nation had the right to interfere in its actions.

A court in the central industrial city of Wuhan jailed Qin Yongmin, a veteran activist, to 12 years for attempting to set up the Chinese Democratic Party in opposition to the ruling Communist Party.

Qin joined Xu Wenli, sentenced on Monday to 13 years, and Wang Youcai, sentenced to 11 years, in the most aggressive crackdown on dissent for two years. In each case, the trials lasted only a few hours.

China accused the three men, each of whom was connected to the new political grouping, of accepting money from foreign enemies. "The trial of Xu Wenli is entirely an internal Chinese affair and no nation has the right to interfere," the Foreign Ministry spokesman, Zhu Bangzao, said when questioned about Xu's harsh sentence.

"China cannot accept these criticisms." Mr Zhu said of the Western condemnations, to which Britain has added its weight.

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Israel looks to the 'unknown' general



Shahak: seen as being in mould of Yitzhak Rabin

Military leader is courted before he enters poll race, writes **Ross Dunn** in Jerusalem

EVEN before declaring his candidacy, the former Israeli military leader, Amnon Shahak, is being hailed as a future Prime Minister in the mould of the late Yitzhak Rabin.

It is far too soon to tell whether General Shahak — like Mr Rabin a former chief of the armed forces — will live up to the high expectations of Israelis longing for a military man to lead them testing times.

When asked in a rare interview earlier this year about the relationship between government and military, he said: "There are no secrets in Israel, even though not everything comes out accurately."

General Shahak, 54, is largely unknown in the turbulent world of Israeli politics, which is often driven by rumour and speculation.

A spokesman for the Defence Forces refused to give any details of his career, and until he officially steps out of uniform he is prevented from issuing political statements — making it impossible to assess his policies, or for his rivals to attack him.

The guessing game is expected to end soon, with a public statement about his intentions to join or lead a new centrist party. But even before such a declaration, some aspects of General Shahak's strong character and sense of ambition are becoming clear.

Since stepping down as Chief of Staff in July — but remaining a serving officer — he has been sought out by the opposition Labor Party leader, Ehud Barak, who preceded him in the job. Mr Barak wanted to go to the polls with General Shahak as his future Defence Minister.

But General Shahak rejected the offer, showing that he would prefer to give orders rather than take them. Not even the urging of Rabin's widow, Leah, was able to change his mind.

The decision could prove a determining factor in the election campaign, with opinion polls indicating that the general is more popular than Mr Barak and the Prime Minister, Binyamin Netanyahu. This has led to concern among some politicians that the two candidates could split the vote and give Mr Netanyahu victory.

Among them is Yossi Sarid, leader of the left-wing Meretz Party. "I regret very much the fact that he didn't join Ehud Barak," he said. "It's a very great mistake and he is playing directly or indirectly into the hands of the Prime Minister."

That would be sweet irony for Mr Netanyahu, who has long feared that General Shahak would become his most potent rival. The two were involved in serious confrontations when the general led the armed forces.

The first clash occurred in September 1996, when General Shahak was outraged by Mr Netanyahu's insistence that he had followed the advice of the army in deciding to open a tourist tunnel near Islamic sacred sites in Jerusalem's walled Old City. The decision sparked riots across the West Bank which left 80 people dead.

In his final days as Chief of Staff earlier this year, the general was cut off sharply by Mr Netanyahu when he attempted to brief the Cabinet on Palestinian attitudes towards the peace process. Mr Netanyahu dismissed the report as political.

"The only one who gives political reports here is me," he said: "You will give a military report. You are not the Foreign Minister."

General Shahak later said he regretted politicians' attacks on the army. "The army should be outside the political arena," he said, as he prepared to follow a long line of Israeli soldiers who switched to political careers.

But from these, only Rabin is regarded as having been a great leader. Those considered to have had mixed success, at best, include Ariel Sharon, the current Foreign Minister. A hero of the 1973 war against the Arab world, he masterminded Israel's ill-fated 1982 invasion of Lebanon and was subsequently held indirectly responsible for allowing the massacre of Palestinian refugees by Lebanese Christian militiamen.

General Shahak commanded the 1996 invasion of Lebanon, in which nearly 200 civilians died — at least 100 of them in a UN refugee camp.

Mother and six children die in air attack

FROM NICHOLAS BLANFORD IN BEIRUT

A LEBANESE mother and her six children aged between 18 months and 11 were killed yesterday when a missile fired by an Israeli warplane hit their farmhouse in the Bekaa Valley. The house was hit as four Israeli jets staged an air raid near the villages of Janta and Nabi Chit, three miles from the Syrian border.

The raid destroyed a radio transmitter belonging to the Shia Muslim Hezbollah organisation. The children's father, Mohammed Othman, and another of his sons, Alaa, were wounded in the attack and taken to hospital in the nearby town of Baalbek. "I felt I was lifted from the ground and then everything went black," Mr Othman, who suffered shrapnel wounds, said.

The fatalities raised to 24 the number of Lebanese civilians killed in fighting in Lebanon this year. Hezbollah vowed to avenge the civilian deaths. "The extent of the enemy's acts during this holy month of Ramadan knows no limits and will only make us more determined to continue with the resistance," a statement from the group said.

Earlier in the day, warplanes had fired rockets into the Jabbour hills, just north of the Israeli occupation zone, without causing casualties.

The air raids came as Israel weighs its options in Lebanon in the face of mounting military casualties and growing domestic opposition to the 20-year occupation.

An Israeli army spokesman in Jerusalem said aircraft had targeted a guerrilla training facility and a broadcasting station — a transmitter for Hezbollah's Voice of the Oppressed radio station. Although the targets were not near civilian areas, one missile hit a building that was not the target, the spokesman said, describing it as a "malfunction".

The spokesman expressed regret at the loss of civilian life and said an investigation was under way.

Lebanese officials said five other air-to-surface missiles hit the hills around Nabi Chit and Janta.



Muslims at prayer in the makeshift mosque put up by militants near the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth. Photographs: Paul Rogers

Confrontation in town of Jesus

In the second of three visits to biblical towns, **Christopher Walker** reports on religious tension in Nazareth

A DISPUTE between the Muslim majority and the Christian minority in this Galilee town where tradition has it that the Angel Gabriel gave his message to Mary is threatening to sabotage millennium celebrations, including a possible visit by the Pope.

Hundreds of militant Muslims have erected a sprawling tented protest site under the walls of the Basilica of the Annunciation, the church built over the cave where many believe that Gabriel appeared, and they want to build a mosque with a towering minaret.

When I visited the encampment on Paul VI Street last week, green Islamic flags were flapping in the wind under the walls of the basilica, bemusing Christian pilgrims. The protesters were gathered round wood-burning braziers to keep out the biting wind and British and American visitors were abused for attacking "our brother Saddam".

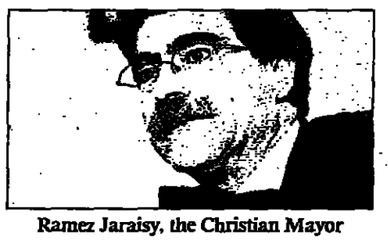
The dispute erupted last December when the first Muslim protesters arrived at the site, where Ramez Jeraisy, the Christian elected Mayor, planned to build a plaza for pilgrims as the centrepiece of a costly Nazareth 2000 scheme. Mr Jeraisy, a member of Hadash, the Arab Communist party, claims the land has been government property since the days of the Turks, subsequently in the hands of the British authorities and now the Israeli Lands Administration. He is dismayed that the squatters have managed to install a kitchen and running water.

In a town of 65,000, divided 70 to 30 per cent between Muslims and Christians, the squatters have refused to budge, despite various legal attempts to evict them, and what began as one small tent has swollen into a huge covered area where thousands of Muslims come to pray every Friday.

The activists oppose the plan to build a Venetian-style plaza for Christian pilgrims and claim the spot is sacred Islamic soil because of the proximity of the tomb of one of the warriors of Saladin, Shahab e-Din. One of the protesters, Khalid Bidar, a computer technician, took me inside.

"We will never leave here until we have our mosque," he said. "This is Muslim land, it is nothing to do with that ridiculous millennium that the Christians are always talking about."

Pious Muslims washed their feet and queued to pray near the basilica, the dominant landmark of Nazareth, consecrated in 1969. The militants claim that the tomb of Shahab e-Din, who fought against the Crusaders at the battle of Hittin, was revealed when an Ottoman school was demolished as part of plans to build the plaza. Factions quickly formed and the Papal Nuncio, Andrea di Montezemolo, tried to persuade the Israeli Government to intervene. "All the Catholic community is very concerned," he said.



Ramez Jaraisy, the Christian Mayor

In his traditional Christmas message, Michel Sabbah, the Roman Catholic leader of the Holy Land and Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, said yesterday that Nazareth was "under pressure of a serious crisis". He added: "The city today is divided and weakened, for the profit of no one, be they Christian or Muslim ... a foreign hand is fomenting discord." There was speculation that he was referring to Iran.

If the mosque were to be built, it would be higher than the basilica. Bishop Boulos Marcuzzo of Nazareth said such a mosque "would shock the Christian world".

Arab Christians fear that the trend of Islamicisation in Nazareth is following that of Bethlehem, where the number of mosques has increased from five in 1970 to more than 70, and where the takeover by Yassir Arafat's Palestinian Authority has further eroded their standing. "Christians are now not even allowed to display coloured eggs at Easter," complained one Bethlehem Roman Catholic.

Religious tensions in the town where Jesus grew up — at that time an insignificant village of a few dozen families — have worsened as a result of recent municipal elections, contested along religious lines.

Mr Jeraisy scraped home, but his hands were tied by the Islamic movement which won ten out of 19 council seats. Last week, during the inaugural meeting, there were violent clashes on the streets. On election day, one knife-wielding Muslim youth said: "If the Christians win, there will be a massacre here. As we see it, the Christians are more our enemies than the Jews."

Assad Ganam, a Haifa University specialist on Israeli Arab affairs, said: "I fear, and I say this carefully, that an emotional struggle, lacking reason and logic, may lead to violence and bloodshed."

☐ *Next: Jerusalem*

WORLD IN BRIEF

Afghan terrorist camps reopen

Islamabad: Guerrilla training camps in Afghanistan have resumed operations after being attacked by the United States in August, according to *The News*, a Pakistani daily paper. Intelligence officials were reported as saying that the movement led by the Saudi dissident, Osama bin Laden, was trying to open a new training facility in north Afghanistan. The organisation was targeted by cruise missile strikes in retaliation for bin Laden's alleged role in the bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August, which killed more than 200. "They are trying to make their new facilities in caves, apparently to escape missile attack," *The News* said. *(AFP)*

Child suicides surge

Tokyo: Suicides among Japanese children have surged by more than half amid an economic recession and rampant bullying at school, officials and social workers said. In the ten months to October, 581 people aged between 14 and 19 killed themselves, up 53 per cent from the same period last year, according to the national police agency. Economic woes are hurting young people as well as their parents, said the spokesman for a welfare organisation that has a telephone helpline. Suicide among adults has also risen, many killing themselves to escape financial difficulties. *(AFP)*

Wedding on death row

Manila: A death row inmate whose execution will be the first in the Philippines for 22 years has married his long-time girlfriend. Leo Echegaray, 38, a convicted child rapist, exchanged vows with Zenaida Javier inside the national penitentiary's maximum-security block, said Roberto Olaguer, the prison chaplain. "I am very happy, although sad because I know he is nearing his death," said Miss Javier, who is believed to have three sons and a daughter by Echegaray. The date of the execution by lethal injection is not publicly known. *(AFP)*

Killing suspects freed

Johannesburg: ANC leaders appealed for calm after a judge released five people who were jailed for the politically motivated massacre of 18 people at Christmas three years ago. The attack was carried out by supporters of the Zulu nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party in Shobashobane, 330 miles southeast of here, during the decade-long war between Inkatha militants and the ANC. Judge Jan Hugo, in an appeal hearing, overturned the convictions of five of the 13 men found guilty of the massacre. *(AP)*

Pensioners' jackpot



Madrid: Christmas festivities started jubilantly for Alex Esteban, centre, from Barcelona, one of the winners in the shared top prize of 42 billion pesetas (about £183 million) in Spain's lottery. Also among the winners were pensioners in the southeastern town of La Union. Corks were popping at a retirement home in the town as neighbours celebrated their win of 3 billion pesetas (£13.1 million) after buying 10 of the 140 winning tickets, each worth 300 million pesetas. It was not clear how many pensioners held shares in the tickets. *(AP)*

Terminal boar

Rabat: Passengers at Casablanca's Mohamed V international airport turned their luggage trolleys into shields when a wild boar went on the rampage, the daily *Opinion* reported. The animal smashed a thick window to enter the airport's bustling main concourse and began running, then skidding because of the building's smooth floor. The boar injured an American citizen working with the United Nations before order was restored when two men jumped on it and managed to subdue it. *(AFP)*

Proud francs continue to pay their way in French Euroland

FROM ADAM SAGE IN PARIS

THE launch of "Euroland" — the French term for the euro zone — will go almost unnoticed next week among consumers in France, where a series of technical hitches will prevent them from paying in euros.

The microchip debit card system used by most French people is ill-prepared to cope with the European single currency, according to French banks. The resulting delay is an embarrassing setback to the Government's plan to give the public an option of paying in either francs or euros after exchange rates between the 11 countries participating in monetary union are fixed.

The Finance Ministry has distributed 33 million orange brochures which proudly proclaim that "you will be able to pay in euros from January 1, 1999". But the reality is different. An overwhelming majority of high-street stores will continue to demand payment in francs, because they either cannot or do not want to switch currencies. Only business-to-business transactions and stock market dealings will move en masse into the world of the euro next month.

The French public will have to search for shops willing to participate in Euroland, according to the organisation that regulates bank cards in France. Le Groupement Carte Bancaire. A spokesman admitted that "very few shops" would be equipped to accept debit card payments in euros next month.

The French railway network, the SNCF, for example, said it will not accept euro card payments before the spring.

The delay is a result of technical problems with debit card machines, which handle high-street sales of Fr2.5 billion (£265 million) a year but which have to be changed to accept euros. Of the nine models used by French business, only two can function in euros and they have only just started to roll off the production line.

Moreover, about 90 per cent of French cheque books will continue to be printed in francs next year, a sure sign that the banks do not expect to see a flood of customer demand for the euro version.

Amended Index Linked Account Rates

Effective from 23rd December, 1998. Account no longer open to new investors

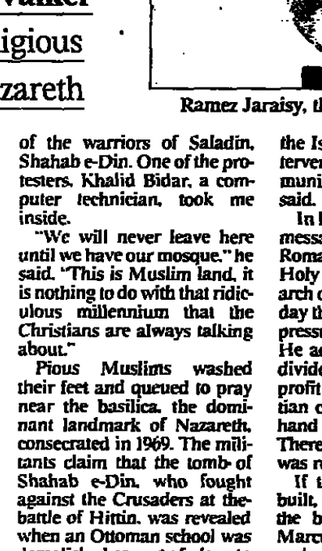
Index Linked Account

		New Rate			Old Rate		
	Minimum Investment	Gross*	Gross CAR**	Net†	Gross*	Gross CAR**	Net†
1st Issue Quarterly	£1,000	5.50%	5.61%	4.40%	5.60%	5.72%	4.48%
2nd, 3rd and 4th Issues Yearly	£1,000	5.50%	-	4.40%	5.60%	-	4.48%
2nd, 3rd and 4th Issues Monthly	£1,000	5.37%	5.50%	4.30%	5.46%	5.60%	4.37%

*Without UK income tax deducted. **Annual return if monthly interest payments remain in the account. †Assuming rate of income tax at 20%. Interest will be payable net of the applicable rate of income tax (which may be reclaimed by non-taxpayers) or gross, subject to the required registration. CAR and net rates are illustrative only and have been rounded to two decimal places. Rates may vary but are correct at the time of going to press. Details of interest rates paid on other accounts are available from any Britannia branch.

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Nkem Chukwu: "excited but serene" after giving birth

Octuplets stir drugs concern

FROM GILES WHITTELL IN NEW YORK

AS THE Chukwu octuplets clung to life in a Houston hospital yesterday, fertility specialists wished them well but gave a warning that the current spate of high-risk multiple births was becoming "almost like an arms race".

All eight babies born to Nkem Chukwu remained in a stable but critical condition. The six girls and two boys weighed little more than one healthy new-born baby between them — just over 10lb. Even if they survive, they are in danger of being left with undersized hearts and lungs, according to the Texas Children's Hospital.

Joy in Houston over the arrival of a living set of octuplets in time for Christmas was quickly tempered by disapproval from experts who fear for mothers and babies, and for childless couples seeking to become pregnant, if the use of fertility drugs continues unchecked.

"This should not be a cause for celebration," Dr Mark Perloe, of the Atlanta Reproductive Health Centre, said. "The cost of caring for these babies and the pregnancy will run into millions of dollars. The risk of death still exists and there is a significant risk that they will have lifelong health problems. I think this is a wake-up call for the medical profession."

The Chukwu babies, listed only by letters in hospital bulletins, are being fed intravenously on sugar and fluids, and kept "sleepy" under special plastic blankets in climate-controlled incubators. The seven born on Sunday morning are still on ventilators, and two of them were yesterday being given supplemental oxygen. The smallest, Baby E, weighed just 10.3 ounces (320 grams) and was no larger than a woman's hand, a hospital spokeswoman said.

The estimated $2 million (£1.2 million) cost of hospital care for the babies will be met by the Chukwus' insurers, making it only a matter of time before American health insurance companies reconsider their coverage of fertility treatments, according to Dr Randle Corfman, a Minnesota reproductive health consultant.

After emergency surgery on Sunday to stop internal bleeding in her abdomen, Mrs Chukwu slept well and was said to be "excited but serene" yesterday. For the first time in weeks she is resting horizontally after being tilted backwards while pregnant to relieve the pressure on her cervix.

Two factors are behind the rise in multiple births, according to experts: baby-boomers trying to catch up after delaying having children, and the Government's refusal to fund reproductive research because of objections from the anti-abortion lobby.

Tornados hit 85 per cent of targets in Iraq

BY MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE EDITOR

THE Ministry of Defence admitted yesterday that 15 per cent of the weapons launched by RAF Tornados during the four-day Iraqi air campaign missed their targets. But officials insisted the failures did not cause civilian casualties.

After assessment of surveillance pictures, Air Marshal John Day, Director of Air Operations at the MoD, said that, of the 85 per cent of targets hit, 74 per cent were destroyed.

The misses, he said, were for a variety of reasons, including technical failures and, in some cases, when Tornados hit the wrong target. "But target misidentification only happened in attacks on military complexes, so a military target was struck but it was not the intended target."

The raids considered unsuccessful were on targets that received only slight damage. "This means that we think the target may still be operational," Air Marshal Day said.

He stressed that the decision to attack some of President Saddam Hussein's palaces was not an act of retribution or "to draw attention to the way in which Saddam has been spending money to build these luxury residences rather than supporting his population".

The attacks were planned to damage Saddam's command and control organisation. The Abu Rajish presidential palace, for example, was on the edge of a complex "where the target was actually an underground command and control facility".

Despite claims by Baghdad that it would not take long to repair many of the buildings, Air Marshal Day said that, provided international sanctions remained, Saddam's missile repair facilities — just one example — would take "years to reconstitute".

MoD officials denied Iraqi claims that coalition aircraft flying over southern Iraq as part of the seven-year no-fly zone operation fired missiles at ground targets yesterday.

Earlier George Robertson, the Defence Secretary, said that the Iraqis would have suffered substantial military casualties, disputing a statement by Tariq Aziz, Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister, that there were only a handful of airstrike victims among Iraqi forces.

Mr Robertson said: "You can bet a million pounds to an orange that we will never hear of the real casualties of the Republican Guard because that is the structure upon which the terror state is built."

Speaking at a press conference at the MoD alongside Rudolf Scharping, his German counterpart, Mr Robertson added: "The (war) machine has been badly damaged, and the casualties will be substantial — but they won't be announced."

He said that 12 cruise missiles launched from B52s had struck Baath Party headquarters, one of the key centres from which Saddam controlled his chemical and biological weapons programme. But the damage was internal.

Herr Scharping said Germany fully supported the United States and Britain because military action against Saddam was "apparently" necessary.

□New York: Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary-General, has set up a task force to design a new weapons monitoring regime for Iraq, writes James Bone. He is under heavy pressure to restructure the UN Special Commission (Unscom) that mounted an eight-year campaign to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, and to remove its Australian head, Richard Butler. Mr Annan was reported to be considering breaking up Unscom and then placing its component parts in other UN bodies.

JEROME DELAY / AP



Graffiti scrawled on a bomb waiting to be loaded onto a US jet on the *USS Enterprise* on the fourth day of Operation Desert Fox

US apologises for Ramadan bomb graffiti

FROM IAN BRODIE IN WASHINGTON

THE Pentagon yesterday condemned the "thoughtless graffiti" about Ramadan that was scrawled on the side of a US bomb to be dropped on Iraq. The inscription said: "Here's a Ramadan present from Chad Rickenberg".

The graffiti was seen in a photograph transmitted last weekend by the American Associated Press from the aircraft carrier *USS Enterprise* in the Gulf. The message was on a 2,000lb laser-guided bomb waiting to be loaded.

Kenneth Bacon, chief Pentagon spokesman, issued a statement of regret designed to convey how sensitive American officials were about Ramadan, the Muslim holy month which began at the weekend. He said the officials were distressed to learn of the graffiti, but he did not speak of any investigation or disciplinary action against Seaman Rickenberg.

Mr Bacon continued: "Religious intolerance is anathema to Secretary of Defence William Cohen and to all Americans who cherish the right to worship freely. The United States deeply respects Islam. We are grateful for our good relations with Arab and Islamic peoples, and we appreciate the important contributions of Muslim-Americans to the US military.

"I know our people in uniform respect and appreciate religious practices different from their own. This incident is a rare exception that does not reflect American policy or values."

Putting graffiti on US weapons is something of a tradition among GIs as a way of letting their enemies know how they feel about them. Indeed, the Ramadan comment was just one of many messages inscribed on weapons in the "bomb farm" below the flight deck of the *Enterprise*. Among the others, with original spellings were "Hold Onto Yer Butt ", "Die, You Magets", "This is Gunna Hurt" and "To Saddam. Mery X-Mas".

Uncomplimentary messages to Saddam were chalked on weapons fired during the Gulf War. In Vietnam, American troops frequently wrote the sarcastic phrase "Sorry 'bout that" on the sides of 105mm artillery shells fired at the Vietcong.

The only memorable American graffiti remembered from the Second World War was the mysterious phrase "Kilroy was here", which appeared in all manner of unexpected places.

Clinton urged to call off his 'attack dogs'

FROM IAN BRODIE IN WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT Clinton was urged yesterday to call off anti-Republican "attack dogs". He was told that his failure to do so amounted to hypocrisy, given his plea last Saturday after his impeachment for an end to "the politics of personal destruction".

Republicans and the right-wing press were taking aim at Mr Clinton for not denouncing Larry Flynt, publisher of the pornographic *Hustler* magazine, who has offered $1 million (£600,000) to any woman who has proof of affairs with high-ranking politicians. Mr Flynt has already exposed Robert Livingston, who was briefly Republican Speaker-elect until his abrupt resignation last Saturday, and has promised that more "big fish" will be uncovered before Mr Clinton's trial in the Senate is over.

The President was also under fire for not curbing James Carville, the "Ragin' Cajun" who managed Mr Clinton's first White House campaign and has now taken on the role of aggressive freelance wielder of invective against his foes. In an outburst against Republicans who voted for impeachment, Mr Carville vowed: "These people are going to pay for what they did. It was a cowardly and dastardly thing, and there's going to be retribution."

Dick Morris, a former Clinton confidant who was forced to resign over his affair with a prostitute, accused the President of being a party to the outing of the sex lives of his enemies. Writing in the *New York Post*, Mr Morris said the President should instead be outing those described as "close to the White House" who give smear stories to the press.

He claimed that such sources were involved in the revelations of extramarital affairs by Henry Hyde, the Republican chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, and Mr Livingston.

However, Joe Lockhart, the White House spokesman, said Mr Clinton would not ask Mr Carville or Mr Flynt to end their efforts to punish Republicans for impeaching the President. He said the White House had no control over any magazine publisher.

As for Mr Carville, he said: "James has strong opinions. We're going to leave it to him to decide what he wants to do."

The President was saved from further embarrassment when a former Arkansas state auditor, Julia Hughes Jones, dropped out of a scheduled appearance on a television talk show where she was said to have been ready to tell hitherto unknown accounts of alleged Clinton corruption when he was Governor of Arkansas. The online *Drudge Report* said she was the victim of a break-in by someone who destroyed information in her computer about the events she wanted to bring up.

Meanwhile, the White House and Senate considered ways to avert a lengthy impeachment trial, which Republicans have claimed will start as early as January 6.

Several senators were stressing compromise and reconciliation involving a censure resolution, along the line suggested by two former Presidents, Gerald Ford, a Republican, and Jimmy Carter, a Democrat.

Four moderate Republicans who voted for Mr Clinton's impeachment in the House yesterday wrote to Trent Lott, leader of the Republican Senate majority, seeking censure for the President rather than his conviction in a trial. "We do not want our votes interpreted to mean that we view his removal from office as the only reasonable conclusion of this case," they said.



Lockhart: "President has no control over magazines"

White House party crush ends year on sour note

President's press critics feel the squeeze, writes Ian Brodie

THE Clintons' decision to change the way they entertain the press at Christmas time has been marred by overcrowding.

Hundreds of those among the 5,200 guests spent up to an hour and a half in queues just to reach the "Winter Holiday Festival" tent in the White House grounds. There they were offered cakes, fancy biscuits, egg nog and white wine, but not the groaning buffet tables and array of drink of years past.

Hillary Clinton did not attend, but the President showed up for a while to chat and shake hands and that was the problem.

When he arrived at the tent, Secret Service agents who are in charge of crowd control at the White House put everyone else "on hold".

That meant anyone who was not in the tent had to wait outside in the street, or in the decorated rooms of the White House itself or in the garden beside the tent.

Some in the queues were good-natured and sang Christmas songs to pass the time. Many others were irritated and a handful made an excuse and left. It was an ordeal for parents with young children. Those with babies whose nappies needed changing were quickly ushered to conveniences at the head of the line.

White House officials said the Clintons were trying to broaden their entertaining and wanted to replicate a successful press picnic they held in the grounds last summer.

Sceptical journalists, however, believed that Mrs Clinton had decided to "dumb down" the entertainment to exact revenge on those she regarded as her husband's relentless critics throughout the year of Monica Lewinsky and impeachment.

In past Christmases, several parties for the press were held inside the White House and the Clintons posed for photos with their guests. This year the receiving line was out, but those invited were urged to bring their extended families instead. Also, the press were mingled with other guests, including government workers, creating a huge throng of partygoers.

Some White House correspondents said in advance they would not attend. It was a sour note on which to end the year, and the holiday spirit could not overcome it.

Leading article, page 15

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THE TIMES

The Times and The Royal Institution announce

Scientists for the New Century



Are you a talented scientist with a passion for sharing your research with a wider audience?

The Times has joined forces with The Royal Institution to launch the Scientists for the New Century Lectures, a series of nine public talks throughout 1999. These lectures will introduce some of the country's best young scientists, revealing the importance of their work and raising the profile of British science.

Applications are invited from scientists, technologists and engineers who would like to share their work through these high-profile events. Nine scientists will be chosen to speak on the basis of academic excellence and their ability to communicate. The selection panel will be chaired by the Director of The Royal Institution, Professor Susan Greenfield. At the end of the series, one speaker will be awarded the prestigious Times-RI medal for their contribution to the communication of science.



Applicants, who should be under 40 years of age, should send a CV, a 600-word outline of the lecture, and the names of two referees to the Director, The Royal Institution of Great Britain, 21 Albermarle Street, London, W1X 4BS. For further details, see www.ri.ac.uk/newcentury/ or call 0171-409 2992. The closing date for applications is January 6, 1999.

THE ROYAL INSTITUTION OF GREAT BRITAIN

1799 - 1999



One small step for man, one giant leap for the 20th century . . . for some, the Moon landing in 1969 was mankind's most impressive achievement

Our finest moment?

A moon landing or DNA? Scientists decide on the greatest achievements of the 20th century

WHAT is the greatest achievement, discovery or invention of the past century? *Anjana Ahuja* asked major figures in the world of science to muse on the contenders and deliver their verdicts. Although contributors were allowed free rein over any field of human endeavour, most opted for a scientific or technical achievement, with the discovery of the structure of DNA the most popular choice.

SIR NEIL COSSONS

Director of the Science Museum in London. He was awarded an OBE in 1982.

The discovery of the electron in 1897 by J. J. Thomson, although at the end of the 19th century, has profoundly affected most of the 20th.

The first heavier-than-air flight by the Wright brothers at Kittyhawk on December 17, 1903, brought forth, for good or ill, mass air transport and aerial bombardment, both of which reached maturity before the century's end. The direct parallel in the 19th century was the development of the steam railway locomotive in 1804 by Richard Trevithick, and its world dominance before the beginning of the 20th century. In short, the British brought the world the steam railway and in the 20th century the Americans delivered global flight and the first man on the Moon.

But I believe that history will regard the discovery of the structure of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) by Francis Crick and James Watson in 1953 as the greatest event of the 20th century, the full implications of which still await us. The completion of the human genome project next century will exalt their work for ever.

PAUL DAVIES

Theoretical physicist formerly at Adelaide University and the author of popular science books.

There are two choices depending on how profound one can be. Quantum mechanics is the most important physical theory, not just of the last century but of all time. Not only does it give an accurate account of a vast range of phenomena, from atoms to stars, it also changes the way that we must think about the nature of reality. The fact that indeterminism, or uncertainty, is an integral part of the physical universe is the most discussed implication.

So much for physics. In my view, the most profound discovery/invention in the past century comes from the realm of logic and mathematics. It is Gödel's incompleteness theorem. This is the most profound set of facts known to mankind because unlike most facts, which tell us what we can know, Gödel's theorem tells us what we cannot know — ever. In essence, this theorem exposes uncertainty, not in nature, but in the very foundations of logical reasoning itself.

It proves, rigorously, that within any formal scheme of reasoning (eg, the rules of arithmetic), there will always be truths (theorems) that can never be proved to be true from within that scheme. This is deep. It is also for ever.

TIMOTHY GOWERS

A professor at Cambridge University, this year he won the Fields Medal, the mathematical world's equivalent to the Nobel prize.

It is a safe bet that Andrew Wiles's proof of Fermat's last theorem will be remembered in 200 years' time, at least by mathematicians. This was the number one problem in mathematics, open for more than three centuries, and I had not expected it to be solved during my lifetime.



Top choice: DNA structure

The theories of general relativity and quantum mechanics have been with us for most of the century, but even now it seems incredible that such strongly counter-intuitive ideas were ever discovered.

Less unexpected than these, but obviously of fundamental theoretical and practical importance, was the discovery of DNA, which therefore makes my shortlist.

These scientific advances have shown that mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology are linked in ways that would have astounded scientists a century ago. However, for the most impressive achievement of the century, I have decided not to choose an intellectual advance. Instead, I go for the Moon landings as an awe-inspiring example of what can be achieved by a great collective effort. They have not changed our understanding of the world, or greatly affected our daily lives, but it is almost unbelievable that they happened, with Sixties technology, and I feel privileged to be old enough (just about) to remember them.

SIR HAROLD KROTO

Winner of the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1996 for his co-discovery of a new form of carbon. He is a professor at Sussex University.

It is amazing to think, as we learnt this century, that we were all once inside stars. All the carbon atoms were synthesised inside stars and that is why we are here. It is strange to think that some people are still locked inside them and that some people, who should be in space, are down here.

But I think that the discovery of the structure of DNA was the most important achievement of this century, perhaps of any century. The implications for the future are just becoming apparent and it will shape the foundations of society. To use the discovery judiciously and for society's benefit will require a very intelligent approach to ethical and socio-economic considerations.

PATRICK MOORE

Astronomer and presenter of BBC television's The Sky at Night. *He was awarded a CBE in 1988.*

I can speak only about astronomy, and by far the most important development in my field has been the charge coupled device (a silicon chip which can capture images using very faint light). It is just as big an advance in astronomy as the development of the telescope was over the human eye.

It has allowed us to see far farther into space and has increased our knowledge of the universe. And I think we all have a desire to put things in perspective, to find out where we are in the universe.

I am no medical man but I would suspect that the most important achievement that has relevance to us all would be in the field of medicine, such as the first heart transplant. We haven't found a cure for cancer yet but that would be a huge advance.

LORD WINSTON

Professor of Fertility Studies at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School in London and broadcaster. He was made a life peer in 1995.

There are so many things that define the century. The best picture would be Picasso's *Guernica*, an extraordinarily influential picture about war. In the theatre, I would pick the works of the modern Italian dramatist Luigi Pirandello.

In science and technology, Henry Ford and Orville Wright, who gave us the motor car and the aeroplane, have had a far bigger impact on our lives than Watson and Crick's discovery of the structure of DNA. Perhaps it will become more important in the next century but it hasn't made much difference to this one. It hasn't cured anything and doesn't come close to Fleming's discovery of penicillin or the control of malaria. The issue of cloning is terribly irrelevant to most people.

Knowledge of DNA doesn't enrich my life in the same way as the arts do. I respect it and I use it in my professional life, but that is all. It is difficult to name one single achievement, but if I had to idiosyncratically pull one out, it would be 20th-century theatre. Theatre is poetry, language, emotion, painting and imagination all welded into one. Perhaps it is what one thinks about in one's spare time that really matters.

LORD SAINSBURY

Appointed Minister for Science at the Department of Trade and Industry in July.

The most important discovery of the century must be the structure of DNA. The implications will be comparable in impact to that of Darwin's *On The Origin of Species* last century. With the completion of the decoding of the human genome early next decade, many aspects of healthcare will be transformed and the next century will be the "century of biology".



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THEATRE TOKENS

No crib for a bed . . . have you tried Ikea, New Jersey?



Wednesday: I am having a furniture crisis. Every time I walk past our spare room, which I have now started calling "the baby's room", I feel rebuked by its emptiness. I feel a desire to stuff it with overpriced, dinky kid's furniture, a crib with an embroidered bumper, musical mobiles of friendly animals, brightly patterned rugs, cupboards with stencils of stars and new moons. According to the books, I am "nesting" — completely normal for a pregnant woman. But the books do not seem to anticipate Peter's refusal to nest with me. He is too superstitious.

When the egg hatches successfully, that's the time to nest, he insists. "But that's no good," I remonstrate. "The delay on furniture orders in this town is more than 12 weeks."

Secretly, I worry that the baby will not want to come out until it feels there is a cosy nursery awaiting it. I feel it must know that its room is still a dusty shambles full of unpacked boxes of books and files, with blotchy, curtainless windows, and that it has said to itself: "Uh oh. I'm not going to trade the comfort of the womb, swishing around here in a nice warm amniotic sac, for that tip."

The other aspect of our furniture crisis is that we can't seem to find anything suitable. The stuff we love, we can't afford.

It all comes to a head this afternoon as we find ourselves hunting for furniture on Madison Avenue, recently declared the world's most expensive shopping location. On a friend's advice we are standing in The Wicker Garden, an exquisite children's shop on 93rd Street. We gaze in admiration at a white cupboard with delicate, antique wooden appliqué until Peter gulps at the discreet price tag. It could be ours for the trifling sum of $4,250.

"Let's face it, you want this furniture for yourself," he says crossly. "The baby won't know the difference between Wicker Garden and Ikea." Not for the first time he predicts that the child will only gnaw the furniture and, as soon as it can walk, plaster transfers of Teletubbies all over it. "You just have to accept it. A kid's room is an aesthetics-free zone."

Friday: So it is with heavy heart that we plan a trip to Ikea, across the Hudson River in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Without a car. Elizabeth is a difficult place to reach but the Ikea catalogue, which arrives unsolicited in our mailbox at least once a month, boasts of a free shuttle bus from Manhattan. So I call 1 800 IKEA BUS to be informed by a recorded message that the shuttle runs only at weekends. Reluctantly, we heave ourselves into a yellow cab.

I am haunted by memories of navigating the North Circular to reach the evangelical blue-and-yellow beacon of the Ikea warehouse. Visible from miles away, it always seemed impossible to get to. Once there, the few items we ever wanted were out of stock.

But a strange thing happens. Once we emerge from the Lincoln Tunnel and head off down the New Jersey Turnpike in search of exit 14, we find our spirits inexplicably soaring. The miserable grey sky seems to stretch magnificently and the scruffy sprawl of gas stations, McDonald's and Taco Bells seems almost inviting. I realise it is two months since we have been out of Manhattan. Two months since we saw anything more of the sky than a sliver peeping above the midtown skyscrapers, the merest hint of blue, as if viewed through the sunroof of a moving car.

As they say in America, it's déjà vu all over again

As the towering island of Manhattan recedes in his rear-view mirror, our Greek taxi driver becomes increasingly fretful. His initial confident swagger has gone. Finally, he breaks down and, passing a dog-eared map through the Perspex partition, asks us to direct him. "There it is!" I cry triumphantly as I see the garish blue-and-yellow temple of Scandinavian style looming ahead. But, cruelly, it soon disappears behind us as we sail down the turnpike with no exit in sight. "I can't believe this is happening to me once more." I wail. "Yes," says Peter bleakly. "As they say in America, 'It's deja vu all over again'."

Finally, after a tour of the bowels of Newark, we alight at Ikea. The taxi driver grabs Peter's arm. "How do I get back to Manhattan?" he pleads. "You give me directions?"

Ikea American-style proves to be even less enticing than its British counterpart.

"Hmm, the Vajers looks OK," I say encouragingly, pointing to a cupboard with a thin wooden veneer. "Or this. The Norskav?" I indicate a bland bathroom cabinet. "The Anglut? The Navik?"

"I'm having a blood-sugar low," grumbles Peter and propels me to the cafeteria for the dish of the day — meatballs.

But the main challenge of the day is yet to come. As I stand in the checkout line to pay for our meagre purchases — a doormat, a plastic spatula and a small bar of Swedish chocolate — Peter marches off to ask customer services how we get out of here. He returns crestfallen.

"There's a bus that leaves from in front of Toys'R'Us," he reports. "But apparently it's very infrequent during the week."

We cross the empty, windswept parking lot and stand forlornly at the bus shelter, which has no timetable. Eventually, a woman arrives almost totally encased in a parka. "Manhattan?" I say hopefully. But she shakes her head. We wait another 35 minutes, take the next bus to Newark airport and grab a cab.

Why be in power unless you can say what you think?



SUZANNE HUBBARD

Tony Benn, despairing of the politics of spin, says that new Labour's control-freak tendencies are in danger of undermining representative democracy

He condemns the bombing of Iraq, disdains new Labour but will not judge Peter Mandelson. At 73, Tony Benn remains resolutely off-message, says **Moira Petty**

Tony Benn, that latter-day political Pepys, has been a diarist since the age of nine. His office, in the basement of his family house in Notting Hill, West London, is crowded with his indexed reminiscences and catalogued boxes teeter even in the bathroom.

An MP since 1950, the left-wing idealogue now totes a state-of-the-art miniature video camera around Westminster and his Chesterfield constituency, although recordings of his surgeries are for private use. On Sunday, the fruits of recent filming will be seen in a one-hour documentary for ITV.

While he focuses on the nuts and bolts of political life — "What interests me is how things work" — an astringent philosophy runs through the programme. Benn's theory is that a new centrist party is emerging, evidenced by the co-operation between figures like Michael Heseltine, Lord Cranborne, Kenneth Clarke and the Government. "You have to take the Prime Minister's word that new Labour is a new political party and, I'm telling you, I'm not a member of it and I don't intend to be," he thunders. "Then they try and classify other people as old Labour."

At 73, the socialist firebrand, former chairman of the Labour Party and a Cabinet member for 11 years, has mellowed. His lives close to the house owned by Peter Mandelson, newly revealed to be partly financed with a loan from Geoffrey Robinson, but Benn responds generously to the controversy. "I was brought up on the Bible — 'Judge not that ye be not judged'. I'm not a muckraker. The real question is, can you leave the world a better place? Why are there half a million unemployed building workers when there are so many homeless people?

"I feel the same about the impeachment of President Clinton. I would prefer to impeach him for what he has done to Iraq."

Last week Benn was swift to condemn the British and American attacks on Iraq: "I told the Prime Minister that I thought it was deeply immoral. I asked him why we always have to slavishly follow American policy, but as usual we got no answer beyond the fact that he had no choice. The attacks were a breach of the United Nations charter. It will only strengthen Saddam and alienate Arab nations. I was very distressed. War is being turned into a film or a computer game. I appeared on *Newsnight* and they were showing pictures of Baghdad burning as if it was a football spectacle. They were asking a Gulf War veteran how the British pilots would be feeling and I got very angry.

"An Iraqi woman came up to me in Downing Street and cried on my shoulder. Of course, Saddam is a brute. I spent three hours with him before the Gulf War, trying to persuade him to free the hostages, but nobody's hands are completely clean."

I was distressed — war is becoming a computer game

Benn's own family's tragedies have helped to form his beliefs. When he was ten, his mother, Margaret, who fought for the ordination of women and was president of the Congregational Federation, gave birth to a fourth son who died. The body was taken away to an undisclosed destination, leaving the family grief-stricken.

"These are the things which shape your thinking in a way that is more important than political messages," Benn says.

"My older brother, Michael, and I were in the house when the baby was born. The doctor who looked after my mother was a drug addict and the child was strangled by its own cord. My mother saw the baby only briefly, and then the doctor took it away in a little enamel box."

Ten years later, at the end of the war, Benn's father traced the woman who had been the doctor's receptionist. She revealed that the foetus had been buried in a "churchyard somewhere". His father wrote to the bishop to find out where it was, received permission for the exhumation and had the baby cremated and buried.

Another tragedy was the death of his brother Michael, killed on a bombing operation in 1944. "I was very fond of him," Benn says. "It was actually an operational incident. The guys had failed to take the cover off the air-speed indicator so he didn't know how fast he was going. He landed, broke his neck and died. I got a telegram. I was in Africa (in the RAF) — I had to sit through a class with that knowledge. You were expected to keep a stiff upper lip."

Benn will celebrate his golden wedding anniversary next year. His American wife, Caroline, a leading writer, educationist and protagonist of the comprehensive schools system, was a student on a trip to Britain when a mutual friend suggested they meet.

"That was on August 2, 1948," Benn recalls, "and I proposed nine days later on the bench you can see out there in the front garden. I realised at once that this was right, and thought I was rather shy to take nine days. I bought that bench for ten quid from Oxford City Council."

The home in which Benn was raised as a child was, ironically, in view of his attacks on new Labour, on the site on which the party's Millbank Tower now stands. What does new Labour say about his views on its "control freak" tendencies? "I can't say I bother, really," Benn says. "I can't see much point in being in Parliament unless you say what you think. This idea of being 'on message' is in danger of undermining representative democracy. My image is what I shave every morning: I don't believe you should be more than what you really are.

"Things now are covered in hype and spin. I'm not sure I can identify a clear line of argument between the two main parties. The very fact that William Hague could be appearing to be more democratic on [reform of] the Lords than new Labour, or the fact that Paddy Ashdown is more welcome to the Prime Minister than Ken Livingstone is puzzling.

Why aren't we fit to choose our own head of state?

"I met Tony Blair first in 1982. When he was elected leader I wrote him a note, although I hadn't voted for him, wishing him success. He wrote back, saying he'd never forgotten a speech I made, which struck him as one of the finest statements of socialism.

"Knowing me, I had it on tape and it was the most radical speech you could imagine. I copied it and sent it to him, and never heard another word."

Benn cites the recent controversy over the Lords as proof of unholy alliances. He believes that Hague had no choice but to sack Lord Cranborne after his deal with Labour to save some of the hereditary peers. "The reason we've never made any progress with an elected second chamber is that the person who wants a House of Lords more than anyone else is the prime minister of the day," he says. "It meets his requirement for patronage.

"If you took the National Lottery and with the bonus ball created a new peer every week, you'd get a much better cross-section of people. Unfortunately, on the Lords, I'm more of an expert than I should be. I spent ten years trying to get out of it."

Benn's father, William, joined the Labour Party in 1926 after 20 years as a Liberal. "He did what they don't do now, crossed the floor, shook the Speaker's hand and went into the wilderness," he says. "He might never have got back in, but he did."

William Benn became a Cabinet Minister and was created a peer in 1942. "There were no life peers then," says his son. "Dad didn't ask me, but consulted my elder brother. He was killed, and when dad died in 1960, the Tories in the Commons tried to throw me out, saying my blood had gone blue."

Benn was re-elected as a disqualified candidate and was allowed to relinquish his peerage only after a long battle.

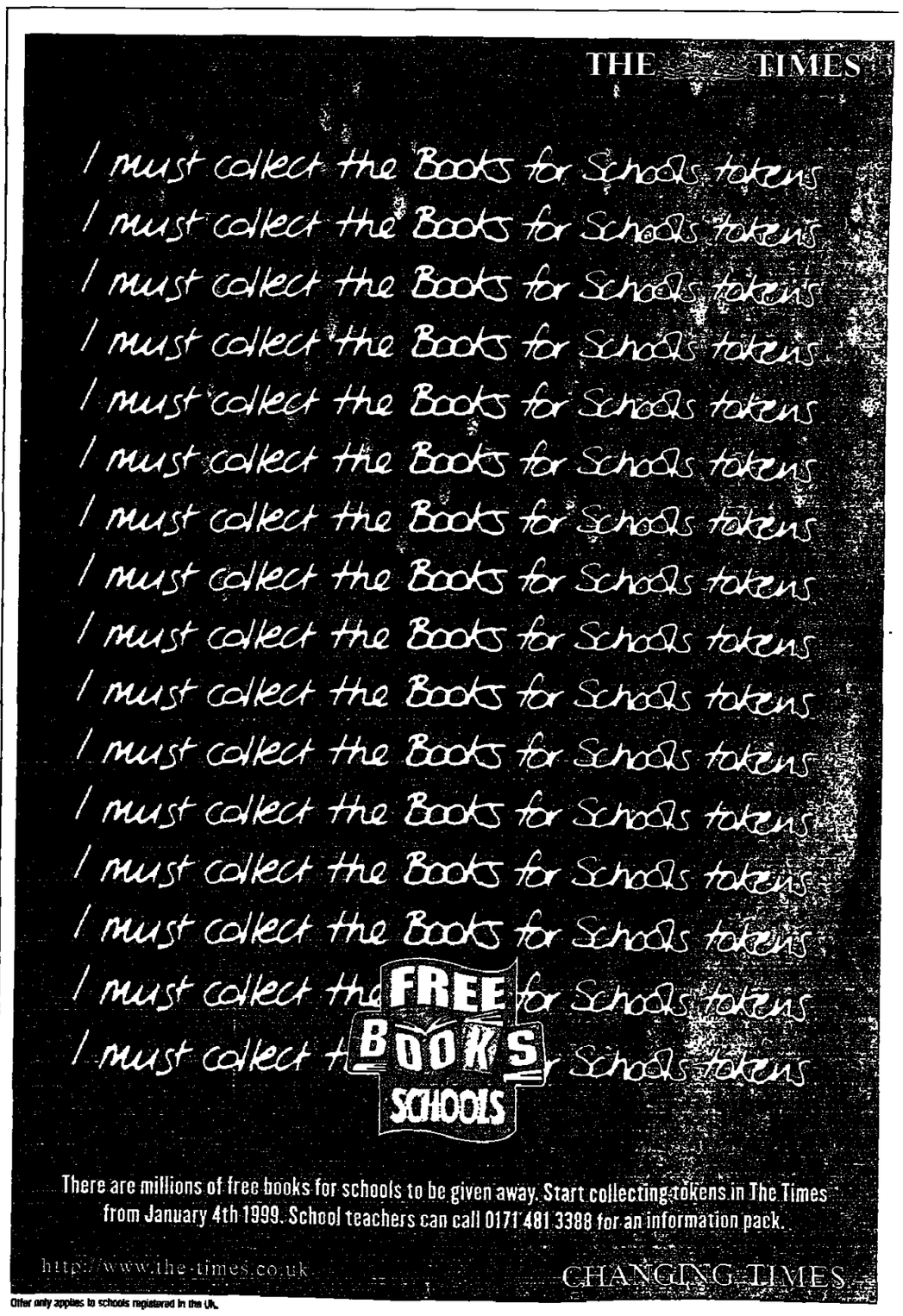
"A medieval power structure is being sold to us again as modernisation," he says. "Why aren't we fit to choose our head of state or second chamber?

"If we elected a head of state, it would probably be someone like Betty Boothroyd. The Speaker is exactly the right sort of person. The Windsors would be a family like any other. If they lived at Buckingham Palace, it wouldn't bother me much."

Benn, who maintains friendships across political divides, says he was never that ambitious. "As long as I can go to sleep at night knowing I've done my job, I don't worry terribly about what happens to me," he says.

"My latest volume of diaries are called *Free At Last*. At my age, nothing much worries you any more."

● *New Labour in Focus: Tony Benn's Video Diaries is on ITV, 1.15pm on Sunday.*



Offer only applies to schools registered in the UK.

Fat, despotic, but man of the moment?

Rod Liddell on choosing the personality of the millennium

Nominations for the *Today* programme's "Person of the Millennium" closed this morning. Thousands have taken part; a shortlist is being drawn up and voting will take place next week. It is now too late for anything terrible to happen. I wish I could adequately express my sense of relief.

My first act on becoming editor of *Today*, one year ago, was to rifle through the previously closed files at the back of my new office to find out, at last, how much everybody earned. There, among yellowing photographs of Jack De Manio, I found a tightly bound bundle of some fifty or sixty plain white, franked postcards, each bearing the legend: "I nominate Teresa Gorman MP as *Today* Personality of the Year, 1995." They had been stuffed there, as if they were in some way dangerous, or pornographic.

It was clear, from reading these postcards, that Mrs Gorman had a great many admirers — who were prepared to emphasise the unanimity of their support by writing these nominations with the same pen. And posting them from the same Commons postbox. On the same day.

I should point out that Mrs Gorman — a popular *Today* programme guest, then as now — cheerfully denied any knowledge of a concerted nomination campaign. Somebody else must have been behind it. But those mouldering postcards should have been an early warning to any new editor thinking of exhuming the competition. It was one I ignored because, I thought, things are different now. In those febrile last years of the Conservative Government — its majority as slender and tenuous as the surface tension of water — the political parties would grasp at pretty much any straw. If winning *Today's* annual competition meant an extra half a percentage point in the polls, then it was well worth the parties orchestrating a campaign to that end among activists. This is what happened and it caused so much trouble that the contest was abandoned for the foreseeable future.

So, this year, we discussed our options and decided — with blithe confidence — that a British Person of the Millennium would obviate all possible problems; nobody would attempt to hijack *this* for their own political ends. Yes, we acknowledged, there's a certain ludicrous element to the poll — how could one compare the achievements of Horatio Nelson with those of William Caxton, for example — but it would provide an interesting debating point about what we value from our past, and which qualities we saw as essential to our "Britishness". Schools would be involved. *Today* contributors would be invited to make their own nominations. It would be contentious without being — how can I put this? — difficult.

The problems began with Jesus. Two hours after the telephone lines opened it was looking a good bet that He would win, despite being, in our view, inelegible to do so. I was dismally aware of the likely newspaper headlines — "BBC Bosses Ban Christ" — and equally aware that bending the rules on His behalf would store up more problems than it solved. How would committed Christians, who had taken our poll as literally as was intended and voted for somebody from Britain, feel when Christ suddenly appeared on the shortlist? I tentatively rang some of those who had nominated Him, pointing out our — perhaps small-minded — objection to the "of Nazareth" part of His name. Many listeners replied that, in a very real sense, Christ was as "British" as he was any other nationality. My response was to the effect that we were limiting nominations to those figures physically, rather than spiritually, located in Britain during the past one thousand years. I added, for good measure, that we'd also banned Satan (though not Aleister Crowley, who picked up one nomination). I'm not sure my arguments won them over; one listener put the telephone down with the words "...and on His birthday, too".

> Many people seem to regard Christ as British

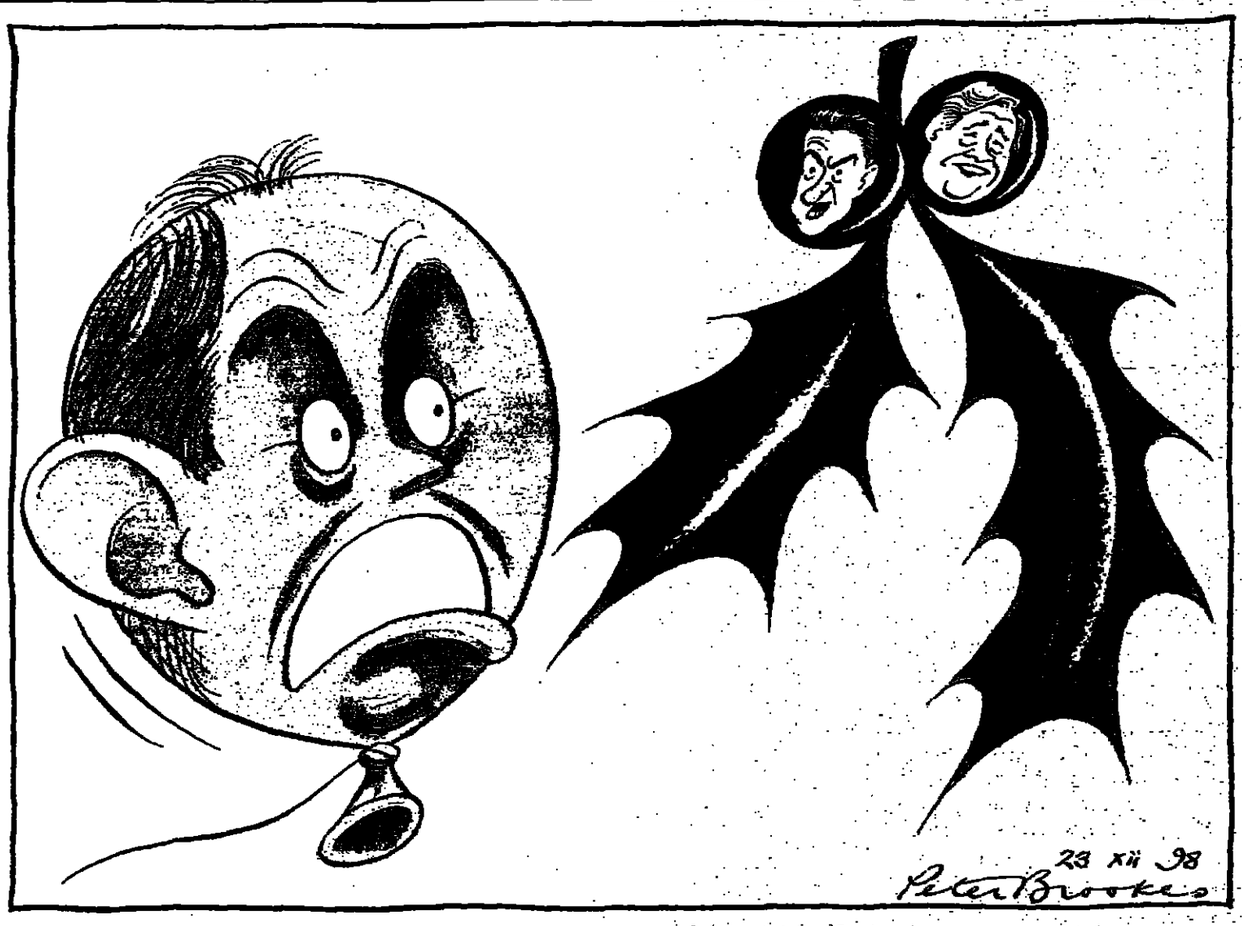
A similar problem arose with William the Conqueror but here we were prepared. He may have spoken French — so, too did another popular nominee, Chaucer — he may even have been born in France, of Scandinavian extraction. But if he isn't British, who is?

Now we're left with a batch of twenty names from which a shortlist of six will be drawn up. Without giving too much away, the list is strong on writers, artists, scientists and very low on military leaders and monarchs. I regret the almost complete absence of philosophers and social reformers. In my darker moments, I might have nominated Thomas Carlyle, but I'd have been the only person in Britain to do so. The votes for Locke and Hobbes, Burke and Smith are lower than I would have expected — a result, I suspect, of a direct ideological split rather than the old canard that Britons are traditionally mistrustful of intellectuals.

The names we're left with are, with one exception, those who have achieved brilliance, rather than had it thrust upon them; they are, perhaps, uncontroversial and even politically correct. If it serves as a picture of what we value about Britain, then the *Today* poll reveals a people dismissive or forgetful of our imperial past.

The exception to the rule is a fat despot who, at least in his dealing with women and roman Catholics was, to paraphrase Thurber, further to the Right than a soup spoon. He was in fourth place last time I looked; Henry VIII is a dark, dark horse.

The author is Editor of Radio 4's Today *programme.*



My Christmas Top Ten

Why go to Tuscany when there are treasures by the Tweed and the Avon?

Simon Jenkins

On a bleak day earlier this month, I staggered up a muddy track towards the River Tweed and Scotland. Here at Norham, St Aidan crossed from Iona to bring Christendom to the heathen English. Four centuries later the Norman bishops built a miniature Durham cathedral and castle, in the hope of resisting further such dangers from over the border. They hoped in vain.

Norham ends my quest for England's thousand best churches. Its black walls drip with rain and the blood of invading armies. The windows facing England have carved surrounds, those facing Scotland are unadorned. Vikings marked the stonework. The Victorians rebuilt the tower. The place is majestic and grim. It could not be further in spirit from England's other most distant church, the sunny clifftop rock near Land's End which St Levan smote in two with the same missionary zeal as St Aidan. St Levan was my first church, Norham my thousandth.

The task is done. What I hope to fashion into a "virtual" English Museum — of the art of the parish church — is ready to be curated. One thousand churches accessible to the public have been visited, and most have been photographed by Paul Barker of *Country Life*. Now comes the league table. Rolling through the project has been the question that obsesses our tabular age: which are the best? Which churches take pride of place in the great hall of English art? Here are the current candidates, with their most prominent features.

St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol. Double north porch. Up these steps Bristol merchants climbed from the crowded quays below. Cabots, Jays, Canynges and Ameryks brought gifts for the Virgin, to boast their wealth and bless their discoveries. Here they heard of the "lands across the ocean" before Columbus. When the Early Gothic inner porch was too crowded, an outer one of astounding splendour was built. Its swirling arches and interlaced patterns were borrowed from Moorish Spain and possibly even Persia. Above is the library where the teenage poet, Thomas Chatterton, researched his medieval forgeries, before leaving for London, ruin and death.

Warwick, St Mary. Tomb of Richard Beauchamp. English magnates may have built castles and mansions. The Earls of Warwick served, and toppled, kings. But they were not too proud to be buried in the church of their local parish. Richard Beauchamp, confidant of Henry V, lived in the golden age of chivalry when noblemen fought Frenchmen, not each other. Before he died (in 1439) he ordered a great chapel built in his honour and a bronze effigy from the "English Donatello", John Massingham. It lies there still, as fine as that of any Burgundian prince, its hands parted half in wonder, half in prayer. The east window above, also by Massingham, has jewels in its stained glass, to add sparkle to the shades of the House of Warwick.

Kilpeck. Doorway carvings. England's most perfect Norman church sits on an unobtrusive Herefordshire mound between the valleys of the Wye and the Dore. The stone, like the earth, is deep red. When lit by a setting sun, Kilpeck's walls take fire and fill the Welsh Marches with flame. The ancient carvings that encrust its outside and inside are a gallery of vernacular art, from Europe's last cultural union, that of the Normans. Here masons used Viking, Saxon, Frankish, Sicilian and Spanish motifs. Oriental warriors peer foliage, dogs chase rabbits, acrobats wrestle, a woman holds open her vagina. At Kilpeck, all the life of a busy and bawdy village is recorded in stone.

Patrington. The steeple. The "Queen of Holderness" hides forlorn on the peninsula at the mouth of the Humber beyond Hull. Its spire rises over uninviting flatland, a needle of cool grey limestone. Tower turns to parapet, parapet to octagon, octagon to crown, crown to soaring spire, in a *hymn* to verticality. Patrington makes Salisbury seem squat. Inside, a maze of Gothic arcades fracture sunlight into lasers that illuminate a hundred carved flowers and faces, monsters and angels, saints and sinners. Small wonder later builders despaired of improvement and turned in defeat to the Renaissance.

Tewkesbury. The Despenser canopy. Hugh le Despenser, wretched favourite of Edward II, was hanged at Hereford in 1325. His wife, Eleanor de Clare, reacted with a frenzy of expenditure that left Tewkesbury with the finest Gothic monuments outside Westminster. Beneath a mighty choir vault she arrayed the chapels and chantries of the Despenser and de Clare dynasties. Most splendid was the tomb of her son, also Hugh, who died in the year of the Black Death, with Decorated Gothic at its zenith. The canopy erupts from its base, swirling upwards in four tiers of arches encrusted with foliage. The summit brushes against the vault like a tree in the wind. This is English Gothic as pure rococo.

Long Melford: The Lily Crucifix window. The clothing towns of Suffolk rarely yielded wealth to match the Cloptons of Long Melford. John Clopton's chantry might be seen as an early version of "death duty", a celebration of a rich man's piety built as part of his parish church. Here is a private altar, with a room for a priest, a tomb and memorials to 32 family members. In the east window glass is an exquisite jewel, a depiction of Christ crucified on an Annunciation lily, Solomon's "happiest of herbs". The giant petals weep round the figure. Through the clear-glass frame a hollybush dips its head outside.

Sherborne. The fan vault. Sherborne town was forever at war with its Abbey. In 1437 the people rioted against the abbot and burnt down his church. The furious abbot taxed them to pay for rebuilding, including a magnificent fan vault. When the abbey was dissolved, the people bought "their" church, turning its east end into the celebrated school. Unlike those of Gloucester or Bath, Sherborne's fans are complete semicircles, the ribs intersecting into glorious lozenges and starbursts. The choir fans are narrower, twisting, almost touching, like a row of palm trees lost in the hills of Dorset.

Cheadle. St Giles' interior. In 1841 the 29-year-old Roman Catholic Earl of Shrewsbury asked Pugin to design him a church to match his neighbouring Staffordshire pile of Alton Towers. It was to be everything the Middle Ages would have offered, and more. Not an inch is left plain. Every window opening, pier, shaft and screen is picked out in medieval colours, like the leggings of a Carpaccio gondolier. The materials are the best, marble, Purbeck, gold-leaf, oak, brass. The Lady Chapel shimmers in red, green and gold. The Doom mural shows the Earl's daughter, Gwendoline, among the saved on the right of Christ. It was the best salvation money could buy.

Fairford. Stained glass. English church art, like that of the private house, was paid for by the rich, but displayed for the enjoyment of the poor. Fairford in Gloucestershire owes its church to the 15th-century wool merchant, John Tame. Shortly before his death he rebuilt it from the ground up, filling the windows with illustrations from the Pauper's Bible, probably by the royal glazier, Barnard Flower. This masterpiece somehow survived the Reformation, Cromwell, decay and even that new church vandalism, removal to a local museum.

Boston. The Stump. The lighthouse of the Fens is a wonder of medieval engineering. At 280ft it is the highest tower, as opposed to spire, in medieval England. Such daring was not equalled until the 19th century. Boston at the time was the next wool port after London. Its burghers planned to erect the Canary Wharf of their day. But the clay could not sustain a spire, so they added lantern upon lantern when money was available, stacking them like a reckless house of cards. It is stable. The Stump still rises serene over the Wash, majestic, eternal, neglected. Someone has built a police station to spoil its river view.

There are 990 more such marvels. My English Museum has a thousand rooms and ten thousand exhibits, most ignored, some undiscovered, few well-known. An Englishman will do the churches of Tuscany or Gascony long before he does the far finer ones of Somerset or Norfolk. Christmas at least is a time when these magnificent works are on public display. One day the world must know it.

comment@the-times.co.uk

Alan Coren



■ It's the thought that counts, so here are several...

Since there is now no time to reply individually to the thousands of kind readers who have written to ask what they can buy me in return for all my work on their behalf during 1998, may I take the liberty of using this column to present my Christmas list?

★I should very much like one of those two way-transmitters no bigger than a pinhead which run off a titchy solar-powered battery and can be attached to the inside of a pair of spectacles so as to be invisible, yet are powerful enough to work at a range of 400 yards. If you do not know where you have left your spectacles, you just shout: "Where are my bloody glasses?" and they shout back: "We are down here on the bloody sideboard where you left us," or "We are in the glove compartment of your bloody car" and so forth, enabling you to find them in a trice.

★I live in a two-storey house, so can get upstairs quite quickly, most days, without my eyes filling with little whirling spots and my heart lurching from one side of my ribcage to the other. However, many of my less peripolitan friends live in houses with anything up to six floors, where you leave your coat on the ground floor and go down to the basement for dinner, then up to the second floor, living-room for coffee, with the guest lavatory either two floors above that or back in the basement. In consequence, I sometimes worry about casting a blight over everybody's evening by dropping dead on one of the umpteen landings, so I should very much like one of those portable electric stairlifts which fold up and fit into a jacket pocket.

★Since my New Year's resolution is to go on a serious diet, I should like a few cases of the '47 low-calorie Château Lafite, and some 5kg tins of cholesterol-free *pâté de foie gras*.

★Last summer, I took my much-loved Swiss Army knife on a punt because we were picnicking on the Cherwell with Oxford friends and I needed to open bottles and tins, but my hands were so wet from the punt-pole that my knife slipped out of them as I was opening it, fell overboard, and disappeared, because the Swiss Army knife does not float. I should therefore be enormously grateful if, this Christmas, some kind person bought me a Swiss Navy knife.

★Leafing through the Christmas Books pages, I have noticed that dozens of celebrities have read hundreds of books this year which were all wonderful, although I had heard of very few of them, and read none. As someone keen to keep abreast of things, I should like one of those big books I'm sure you can get that contain two representative pages from each of the Books of the Year, together with a short synopsis and a few smart things to say after my portable stair-lift has delivered me to the room where everyone else is banging on about them. Another very acceptable present would be one of those 30-minute videos with brief but seminal clips from all the important 1998 films I didn't see because the bastards wouldn't let me smoke in the cinema.

★I have heard that you can get a letter-box with a little sensor in it which detects the approach of junk-mail and activates a metal device that shoves it back into the postman's hand. I should like this to be either in black, to match the door, or chromium, to match the knocker.

★A couple of months ago, I went out to buy one of those robot devices that allows you to sit in a deckchair drinking gin while it takes up the dahlia tubers and puts them in boxes for the winter. I was even prepared to buy the deluxe model, if that was all they had, which will replant the tubers in the spring after it has taken up the wallflowers from the beds the dahlias go in and chucked them on the compost heap. Unfortunately, terrible traffic prevented my reaching the garden centre, so I should be delighted to receive one or other of those robots. Nor would I turn my nose up at one of those things which I think works either by infra-red rays or ultrasound emissions, possibly both, which you can attach to your front bumper to make traffic get out of the way.

Bhutto booty

STRANGE happenings at Benazir Bhutto's Surrey bolt-hole. A burglary at Rockwood, a £2.5 million estate belonging to Pakistan's Oxford-educated former PM, now appears to have been the work of bailiffs. Police were called recently by security guards at the 355-acre villa in Brook; they said a "Raffles-type gang" had cut through gates, broken in and taken £50,000 of goods. But police say "no crime was committed" and I understand the real reason the property had gone was because the bailiffs had gone in.

Neighbourhood Watchers claimed to have seen "thieves" carting away their haul. The "raid" took place as Ms Bhutto was returning to Lahore to surrender her passport after being accused of siphoning £900 million big ones. She denies even owning the property, but locals spot Benazir and Ali Zardari, her polo-playing spouse (pictured right), at the joint, which boasts a landing strip, polo ground and bullet-proof windows. The Pakistan Government says they have traced ownership to an Isle of Man company owned by Zardari. Someone is not paying the bills.

● *WHEN Peter Mandelson is experiencing such a busy run-up to Christmas, it seems churlish to refer to the nickname he has been given by security officers. But what the hell. It is "Wendy". Hope they aren't referring to his nice house. Meanwhile, even the DJ Chris*



Evans is abandoning Wendy. His Cool Britannia crony is selling in Notting Hill to move to Belgravia.

In the drink

LORD Lloyd-Webber has landed Marco Pierre White in the soup.

The cook has received a formal police warning about after-hours drinking at his flagship joint after Andrew mentioned its late-night atmosphere in a review. "Mirabelle was buzzing at 1am," the tunesmith wrote. Sadly, he didn't know that punters should have supped their last dregs by then.

Avid readers of restaurant reviews, the local bobbies at West End Central noticed Lloyd-Webber's tip-off and dropped by Mirabelle at about 1am to observe White's respect for licensing rules.

The joint was swinging and a police warning followed. But nothing improved so managers were hauled into the local nick and given a formal warning. If this is ignored, Mirabelle could be closed.

Christophe Capron, manager, says: "In all restaurants people tend to drink a little later and it's hard to tell them to finish. As we're very exclusive we tend not to treat them like pub customers." I trust police will respect the distinction.

● *DESMOND MORRIS points out that if you drive on Christmas Day, police can comandeer your car, sell it and give proceeds to the needy of the parish. This is thanks to the Holy Days and Fasting Act 1551, designed to "render everyone equal on Christmas Day by preventing the rich from displaying their wealth by arriving at church in expensive carriages".*

In detention

LOCK up your daughters, its Tony Banks. The Sports Minister has been caught making a desperate attempt to break in to a girls' school. Tony's troubles began when his driver was unable to locate the entrance to the Davison Church of England School for Girls in East Worthing, where he was due to entertain pupils.

A frustrated Banks ordered his chauffeur to halt and tried to force an entrance. An 8ft-high wall blocked his path but Tony, a physical sort, scaled the obstacle. Unfortunately the sight of the intruder scurrying around the grounds disturbed the girls and security escorted the panting minister to the Headmistress's office.

So distressed was Tony after his St Trinian escapade that he needed a couple of "sharpeners" before facing the expectant ladies.

I just feel sorry for his driver, blamed recently for Bank's lateness after the ministerial car had apparently squashed a pigeon.



Scenes change

THE Duchess of Norfolk employs an admirably efficient method to paint charity Christmas cards. She cheats. The wife of one of our smarter toffs admits to applying white paint liberally to her summer landscapes based on views at Bacres House, a family pad in the Hambleden Valley, Oxon.

As well as winter scenes (above), Her Grace also turns out "dotty nativities with angels galloping around" signed "Anne Norfolk" for Help the Hospices, a charity she founded. "I have never studied art, which is patently obvious," the duchess says far too modestly. "But I am quite fast. My darling old husband sometimes takes longer on the framing than I do to paint my pictures."

● *FUN for Carthusian monks of St Hugh's Charterhouse, Sussex. No meat and no TV as they "devote the day to the Lord in silence". Boxing Day allows 'brief chatter in the parlour'. Jollification reaches its zenith when the monks enjoy a 12-mile walk, marching in pairs and changing companions every half hour.*

JASPER GERARD

PUBLIC INTEREST

Mandelson has embarrassed both party and Prime Minister

Vanity Fair's Becky Sharp specialised in leading the high life on virtually no money. Hers is a model that Peter Mandelson, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, has followed. It was Becky Sharp's soaring social ambition that was eventually her undoing. Mr Mandelson shares her flaw — and may yet share her fate.

Cabinet ministers do not need to live in London's most fashionable district. Only because Mr Mandelson's vaunting social aspirations marched his political ambitions was he helpless to resist the lure. Geoffrey Robinson took advantage of his weakness by bringing such an extravagant house within reach of an MP on a £43,000 salary.

By lending Mr Mandelson £373,000, however, Mr Robinson put him under an immense obligation. He is paying back neither interest nor principal for the moment, and he has no need to take out an endowment. Most important, this is a sum that no bank or building society would have been prepared to advance to a man on Mr Mandelson's income.

It was a serious lapse of judgment for Mr Mandelson to have accepted Mr Robinson's largesse in the first place. It is extraordinary that he did not seek to consult Tony Blair first. Presumably he feared that the answer would be no, which compounds his offence. How could a politician obsessed with presentation not see how bad the agreement would look if it were revealed? Just as Labour politicians were making hay with Tory sleaze, one of their prime spokesmen was embarking upon a dubious deal of his own.

Mr Mandelson did not see fit to declare the arrangement even once he became a minister. The code of conduct for ministers is clear. They must "scrupulously avoid any danger of an actual or apparent conflict of interest between their ministerial position and their private financial interests. No minister should accept gifts, hospitality or services from anyone, which would, or might appear to, place him or her under an obligation." Allowing Mr Mandelson to buy this house is more than a service: saving him several thousands of pounds a year is surely a gift.

Ministers are told by the code that, where they fear that "actual or perceived" conflict of interest may arise, they may wish to take the advice of their Permanent Secretary. In cases of doubt, it is "subject to the Prime Minister's decision" what action they should take. Yet Mr Mandelson told his Permanent Secretary and his Prime Minister only last Thursday, when he was forced to do so. Even when Mr Robinson himself became subject to a DTI inquiry, the Trade Secretary did not mention their financial relationship.

He may have distanced himself from passing quasi-judicial judgment on his colleague. But, as the Prime Minister's close adviser, he has had every chance to pass political judgment on Mr Robinson. When Mr Blair was deciding last summer whether or not to sack the Paymaster-General, whatever counsel Mr Mandelson gave his boss was surely suspect.

The Trade Secretary has had countless opportunities to apply the honesty and transparency to his own dealings that Mr Blair promised would be the hallmark of new Labour in office. He has failed at every turn. While Mr Blair would be reluctant to lose him, he must now feel betrayed and badly let down. Mr Robinson, whose past is mired in the affairs of Robert Maxwell, has long been a stain on this government. Mr Mandelson now shares some of that same stain. The Prime Minister may worry that Mr Mandelson is so much part of the modernising project that he is irreplaceable. But other "projects" have succeeded well beyond the life of their architects. In this season of predictions, we hazard that this could be Mr Mandelson's destiny too.

ARISTOCRAT AND DEMOCRATS

Lord Esher, an unlikely but central figure of Edwardian times

Much of the story of this century has been, for industrial societies at least, the emergence and triumph of mass democracy. In numerous nations a process of peaceful transition proved impossible and ancient institutions were destroyed by the onset of popular politics. It is one of the distinctive features of this country, much admired by many abroad, that radical change has taken place while affording the impression of effortless continuity. The most testing moments for the constitution came in the opening decade of this century.



The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 left an uncertain political structure. The electorate had expanded enormously during her reign but not to the extent that a majority of all adults enjoyed the franchise. This was, though, the direction in which matters were clearly travelling. The central components of the State — Crown and Parliament — had not yet adjusted to the forthcoming new order. The first Prime Minister of this century, Lord Salisbury, had little time for the democratic impulse. The later Liberal Government, elected in 1906, was determined, through the "People's budget", reform of the House of Lords and Irish Home Rule, to leave a radical legacy.

The man who steered Edward VII and then George VI through this treacherous territory was Reginald Brett, the 2nd Viscount Esher. Although his official title at the time was formally that of Deputy Constable and Lieutenant-Governor of Windsor Castle, Lord Esher was the eyes, ears and mind of his Royal master. His enthusiasm for intrigue drove ministers — Conservative and Liberal — to absolute distraction. He was, as Simon Heffer put it in his masterful analysis of the period, *Power and Place*, "one of the most ghastly, yet most accomplished men in public life in the twentieth century."

He was also an ironic figure. A former Liberal MP, Esher took pride in his microscopic knowledge of constitutional procedure. This heritage left him dedicated to preserving the historic protocol and powers of the monarchy. However, his relentless pragmatism led him to move Edward VII away from outright conflict with the House of Commons. This in turn would oblige the House of Lords towards a reluctant tolerance of their new, diminished, status. When the king died in 1910 he bequeathed what would swiftly become a constitutional monarchy.

Lord Esher exercised the undoubted influence that he did through an unusual combination of charisma, intelligence and loyalty. He appreciated that Edward VII had very limited options compared with his predecessors. As an aristocrat, Esher doubtless would have preferred that neither redistribution of income nor constitutional change had come to dominate the national agenda. Once they did, he sought to contain not contest their impact.

As this century starts to close, many of the issues that marked the Edwardian era have returned with a vengeance. Constitutional reform, the size and scope of the State and the future of Northern Ireland are once again at the heart of contemporary politics. The functions of Crown and Parliament will doubtless be the subject of much discussion over coming decades. It remains to be seen who, if anyone, will prove to be the future Lord Esher.

PARTY POOPERS

An inspired White House solution to the hospitality budget

It is the season of parties and festivities when corporate hospitality flows as freely as the indiscretions by middle management. What better time for personal and professional revenge? The White House has just set a fine example of how to stage the party from Hell, an exquisitely planned snub to all the journalists who ensured such an eventful year for the President. The guest list, a record at 5,200, was the first subtle hint to network White House correspondents that they no longer could boast their once exclusive access. Holding the party in a large tent on the lawn instead of the warmth of the White House ballroom nicely reinforced the message. But the *coup de theatre* was the appearance of the President himself, radiating bonhomie and ensuring that officious Secret Service officers kept hundreds waiting outside while Mr Clinton lingered over the handshakes.

In many a boardroom the example will seen as an inspired solution to the rising hospitality budget. For the aim must be to throw a party that not only occasions the maximum rancour but ensures that next year the same guest list can be sent out in the sure knowledge that less than half the replies will be acceptances.

The first golden rule is to leave off some big names and leak the list to the press. Sir Edward Heath did well at his 80th birthday: the omission of Baroness Thatcher not only ensured that a huge row broke out among the Thatcherites but ensured that others conveniently considered staying away in sympathy.

The second, obvious, inconvenience is a certain parsimony with food and drink. During the Gorbachev years the Soviet embassy made a nice point about Russia's new sobriety by reducing the liquor to two small bottles of vodka on a table at the far end of a crowded room, and having waiters circulate with colas and juices. The spiteful host can, of course, ensure that garlic is added to most nibbles, that the heating is fully on and that a single small rack is provided for all the coats to ensure the maximum hilarity for departing guests.

At private parties one can make sure that all guests are introduced to the slightly deaf aunt. An absent-minded "fancy dress" scribbled at the bottom of a few invitations will provide a contrast in sartorial style. And small children can be allowed to wander in freely under instruction to force as many Twiglets on each guest as possible. In short, the White House example ensures that corporate and personal hospitality can repay months of insufferable behaviour while ensuring far fewer hangovers this Christmas.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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A personal loan to a public servant

From Lord Renton of Mount Harry

Sir, Peter Mandelson is guilty of the same sin as Lord Hoffmann — serious lack of judgment.

Both of them worldly-wise and highly intelligent, they nonetheless lacked the common sense to declare, in the one case, a long-standing association with Amnesty, in the other, a large personal loan from a fellow minister under investigation by his own department (reports, December 22).

Lord Browne-Wilkinson and other senior judges considered Lord Hoffmann's error sufficiently serious to re-open the House of Lords decision on Pinochet. Mr Mandelson's error must make the Prime Minister doubt the suitability of his remaining in charge at the DTI.

Yours sincerely,
TIM RENTON,
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Offham, Lewes,
East Sussex BN7 3QW.
December 22.

From Mr Oliver A. W. Lodge

Sir, Since Downing Street has issued a statement that, in the light of the loan from Mr Robinson to Mr Mandelson, the Prime Minister is confident that Peter Mandelson has been "properly insulated" from any decision relating to Geoffrey Robinson, I wonder whether the Prime Minister will confirm that he has not, since the loan was established in 1996, discussed with Mr Mandelson the appointment of Mr Robinson to public office, or the continuation or discontinuation of his appointment.

Yours faithfully,
OLIVER A. W. LODGE,
2 Nimrod Road, SW16 6SY.
December 22.

From Mr Adam Ogilvie-Smith

Sir, To avoid conflicts of interest, civil servants are forbidden from lending money to one other. Why should their political masters be any different?

Yours faithfully,
ADAM OGILVIE-SMITH,
Hyde House,
Longworth, Oxfordshire OX13 5HH.
December 22.

From Mr David T. Staples

Sir, May I assure the Paymaster General (what an appropriate title in the circumstances) of my utmost discretion if he were to offer me a large loan at a preferential interest rate.

I am not a member of either House of Parliament and my employer does not require me to declare any favours from friendly Cabinet ministers.

I can be contacted at the address below.

Yours sincerely,
DAVID T. STAPLES,
11 St Luke's Church,
42 Mayfield Road, N8 9LP.
dstaples@tpc-lon.com
December 22.

From Mr Eduard Fuller

Sir, I was surprised to learn from the *Newsnight* programme on the BBC of Mr Peter Mandelson's financial connection with Mr Geoffrey Robinson.

I had the impression that the BBC was under strict orders not to mention Mr Mandelson's private life.

Yours sincerely,
EDUARD FULLER,
Springfield Farm, Buckhorn Weston,
Gillingham, Dorset SP8 5HX.
efuller9@aol.com
December 22.

From Mr Peter Grafton

Sir, At a local wedding last week, the Order of Service included a Wedding March attributed to "Mandelsson". Presumably a declarable interest — however indirectly!

Yours faithfully,
PETER GRAFTON,
57 Padbrook, Limpsfield,
Oxted, Surrey RH8 0DZ.
December 22.

Illegal immigration

From Mr Roland Phillips

Sir, "Just the slightest lateral thinking" yields James Stuart-Menteth the idea of paying lorry drivers £50 for each immigrant that they turn in (letter, December 16).

With slightly more lateral thinking one can envisage the outcome of his proposal: lorry drivers dragging as many illegal immigrants into the country as possible.

Yours faithfully,
ROLAND PHILLIPS,
46 Hollycroft Avenue,
London NW3 7QN.
December 16.

From Mr Stephen O'Loughlin

Sir, Since to be delivered directly to the door of the authorities to claim asylum, and the contingent housing and income benefits, is precisely what illegal immigrants seek. Mr Stuart-Menteth's suggestion hardly seems the triumph of lateral thinking he claims.

Yours faithfully,
STEPHEN O'LOUGHLIN,
21 Colwyn Street,
Huddersfield HD1 4PQ.
December 16.

Effectiveness of air assault as challenge to Saddam

From Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Graydon

Sir, Simon Jenkins ("Stone Age strategy", December 18) raises some powerful political points but, sadly, reverts, yet again, to his creed that "proper wars are fought by ground troops" and that air forces "are detached from the violence they unleash".

His underlying assumption appears to be that bayonet to bayonet fighting (human attritional warfare) is a moral way to conduct war, whereas the use of long-range systems to reduce an enemy's fighting capabilities — of which air power is the most obvious but by no means the only example — is somehow immoral. What utter rot.

Wars (I don't know what are proper wars) are fought by sea, land and air forces together using the best means to bring success. In many cases, probably the majority, air will lead to provide the air dominance which enables surface forces to operate most effectively. In regard to Iraq, the alternatives are stark: airmen are well aware of the limitations of bombing but they are also aware of what can be achieved militarily with the use of air power. Balanced advice is always provided to politicians.

Mr Jenkins prefers peace; but if war, then he envisages the invasion of Iraq by ground troops. Imagine. Even if the three-month build-up necessary could be sustained politically and militarily, what in the meantime would Saddam be doing in the weapons of mass destruction field, or to any hint of internal dissent? And after an invasion, one in which thousands of soldiers from both sides would be killed in his close combat engagements, occupation for six months, six years? And where is this compliant government in exile ready to step into the breach?

Intended or not, the article is an insult to the multitude of airmen from all the Services who have been shot at, shot down, imprisoned, tortured and killed, and it shows a lack of knowledge of modern warfare.

Reducing the risks to our ground forces by engaging the enemy's war fighting capabilities at long range is a lot more sensible, and I would suggest moral too, than fighting eyeball to eyeball when you don't need to.

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL GRAYDON,
The Royal Air Force Club,
128 Piccadilly, W1P 0PY.
December 18.

From Professor Emeritus Felix Weinberg, FRS

Sir, I am emboldened by the apparent lack of viable proposals from your correspondents on December 21 (beyond laser-controlled sandwiches) to suggest that an offer of lifting of sanctions, conditional upon UN-supervised multi-party elections in, say, nine months' time, might provide a stimulating challenge to Saddam Hussein.

Yours faithfully,
FELIX WEINBERG,
59 Vicarage Road, SW14 8RY.
December 21.

From Mr Peter M. G. Hime

Sir, When in the 1930s the League of Nations began to appease the aggressors the league simply became an institution for a good lunch and conversation.

History should have taught us that appeasement can and should at some stage become exhausted as a satisfactory policy. The only certainty deriving from the current action against Saddam Hussein is that any action, or no action, would have been condemned by one party or another.

Most nations' ultimate aim is to secure world peace. How are we to achieve this if not by ensuring that brutal dictators like Saddam may not escape the consequences of their actions?

Is it not now time to address that difficult task of how a permanent UN military force can be created? Strong and determined nations like the US and UK will never be seen in their true light if they alone are seen as the aggressive instrument of the United Nations.

If the sad errors of the League of Nations are to be mirrored by the UN then yet another expensive luncheon club will arise out of the ashes of Iraq.

Yours faithfully,
PETER M. G. HIME,
22 West Allington,
Bridport, Dorset DT6 5BG.
December 20.

From Dr Patrick Moore,

Sir, How many new hospitals could have been built in Britain with the money spent on Operation Desert Fox?

Yours faithfully,
PATRICK MOORE,
Farthings, West Street,
Selsey, Sussex PO20 9AD.
December 21.

From Mr Alan J. Miller

Sir, While I accept the decision to avoid an attack on Iraq during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, I would point out that no such niceties were observed by the Arab states which attacked Israel on Yom Kippur — the holiest day of the Jewish calendar — in 1973.

Yours sincerely,
ALAN J. MILLER,
4 Cloister Gardens,
Edgware, Middlesex HA8 9QL.
alanm@cwcom.net
December 19.

Care in the community

From Rabbi Julia Neuberger, Chief Executive of the King's Fund

Sir, Your leader, "Without care" (December 9; see also letters, December 15), rightly emphasises that care in the community needs public provision and public compassion, and that both have been allowed to fall too low.

But the public debate has been rife with claims that caring for people with mental illnesses in their own communities is inherently unsafe. We should not allow a minority of tragic cases to dictate the way thousands of people who are not a threat to others are treated by mental health services and viewed by others in their communities.

The Government's plans to improve the care provided for people with mental illnesses are very welcome, but I am concerned by the language of compulsion being used in public debate. Compulsory treatment orders, in the community or a hospital, may be needed for a few people. But they should only be used as a last resort after all other treatment opportunities have been exhausted.

Public confidence in a "safe service" must be balanced with the human rights of individual patients to participate as equal partners in treatment decisions and to have a decent quality of life — the public compassion you call for.

People with mental illnesses need proper support through a range of quality services including assertive outreach teams and 24-hour crisis centres that can respond to those with the most severe problems and most urgent needs. The King's Fund and the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health are funding three schemes in London to develop assertive outreach teams.

Your call for more money is very welcome — but we also need more co-operation between services, more coherent thought, and a recognition that working with those who suffer acute mental illness can be very tough and that those who do it need our support, not our blame.

Yours faithfully,
JULIA NEUBERGER,
Chief Executive,
King's Fund,
11-13 Cavendish Square, W1M 0AN.

Conservation 'loophole'

From Mr John Wells-Thorpe

Sir, Before any consideration is given to tightening regulations for assessing "enabling development" (letter, December 7, from a number of conservation groups) it must be remembered that there will always be a substantial number of properties of architectural and historic importance whose salvation can only be obtained through this route.

If an estate does not lend itself — and many don't — to recreational amusement, "heritage" family entertainment, or even mineral extraction in one recent case, then permission should be granted for well-designed and contextually aware "enabling development" — a legitimate device to obtain planning permission when there is no other source of income for repairs and maintenance.

In reasonable hands, such a step provides a wholesome and entirely practical procedure and should be encouraged because the likelihood of government funding for restoration remains remote. We need better examples of how this can be done well in order to raise standards for others to emulate; otherwise the deterioration and ultimate loss of irreplaceable buildings will continue unabated.

The clever developer is likely to arouse concerns if it appears that he has no inclination or expertise to use the property for "educational" purposes; or that he is not keen to give access to the public.

By all means exercise greater discrimination in determining applications, but not please, by adding further layers of bureaucracy which could finally discourage the owner of a listed building from making a genuine attempt to secure the entire property for posterity.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN WELLS-THORPE
(Chairman), The Regency Society of Brighton and Hove,
3 Windlesham Gardens,
Brighton, Sussex BN1 3AJ.
December 7.

Greek gifts

From Mr David Powell

Sir, "How many things I can do without!" was the response of Socrates when looking at the multitude of items exposed for sale in the Athenian market. This is the sort of positive attitude to adopt when we are indulging in Christmas shopping.

Yours sincerely,
DAVID POWELL,
31 Bush Hill,
Northampton NN3 2PD.

Century people

From Mr Andrew Gibbs

Sir, You deserve a rocket. Werner von Braun, whom you include in your list of "People of the century" (leading article, December 22) was the father of the German V2 rocket programme. Fortunately for Europe, he was not a "nuclear boffin".

Yours faithfully,
ANDREW GIBBS,
20 Winnock Road, Yiewsley,
West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7RH.

Guidelines for giving

From Mrs Catherine Mitchell

Sir, With the ever-increasing number of requests for donations from assorted charities, my husband and I are in danger of being submerged in paper. We support as many good causes as possible but, in recent years, have imposed our own guidelines as to what constitutes an acceptable begging letter. Any charity sending us a bribe, be it a penny, a pencil, or even a T-shirt, is automatically filed WPB.

This year a phenomenon new to us has emerged: the charity Christmas card — not the ones most of us buy, but the cards we have received from the charities we support thanking us for that support. Do they think we send donations so that we can receive more cards?

We may well be reviewing our guidelines for next year.

Yours faithfully,
C. A. MITCHELL,
74 Palace Road, SW2 3JX.

Letters may be faxed to 0171-782 5046.
e-mail to: *letters@the-times.co.uk*

'Too busy' for church

From the Archdeacon of Liverpool

Sir, Ruth Gledhill and Anthea Lawson ("Too busy to go to church", Weekend, December 19; see also Mr Alan Millard's letter, same day) present an interesting analysis of the popularity of the Midnight Mass, coupled with the reflection that it is more popular than a service on Christmas Day. "Church leaders" apparently excuse the trend on two counts: that the Midnight Mass is a revival of keeping an all-night vigil, and that families now have too much to do on Christmas Day.

I do not find such excuses at all convincing. The trend to attend the Midnight Mass denies children the opportunity to celebrate the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day. This year there won't even be an awareness of Christmas morning worship on any of the main television channels, so that the day simply becomes one of parties and presents.

Would it not be preferable to encourage Christians with children to adjust their Christmas morning timetable (it can be done) to include worship as a celebration in which all the family can participate? The children will grow up knowing they have been included. They will come to know, too, that the Christ child grew up and stands for the values of love, peace and justice.

Yours sincerely,
BOB METCALF,
38 Menlove Avenue,
Allerton, Liverpool L18 2EF.
December 21.

It's not a date

From Mr David Cunningham

Sir, A recent letter from Barclays Bank about its Barclaysafe service invited me to "retrieve your documents by calling in to ..... branch (during normal weekday banking hours), on or before 25 December 1998".

Why, I wonder, was my telephone request to have my documents ready for me that day met with such little amusement?

Yours etc,
DAVID CUNNINGHAM,
64 Westleigh Drive,
Sonning Common RG4 9LB.
a2619491@infotrade.co.uk
December 22.

Angels' modesty

From Mr Michael J. Davis

Sir, The Rural Dean of Beverley (letter, December 19) reminds us that the expression "cover their feet" is a euphemism for modesty. What angels actually have to cover is a source of puzzlement for us all.

In addition to angels, Saul went into a cave "to cover his feet", as given in the King James version (I Samuel, xxiv, 3). Most modern translations quote this as "to relieve himself".

I was once reduced to helpless laughter when, using a modern (transatlantic) translation of the Bible at a prayer meeting, I was asked to read, "Saul went into a cave to go to the bathroom . . . "

Yours modestly,
MICHAEL J. DAVIS,
3 Spring Bank Lane,
Rochdale, Lancashire OL11 5SE.
miked@trustsof.demon.co.uk
December 20.

COURT CIRCULAR

SANDRINGHAM HOUSE

December 22: The Lady Elton has succeeded The Lady Susan Hussey as Lady in Waiting to The Queen.

ST JAMES'S PALACE

December 22: The Prince of Wales, Patron, The Abbeyfield Society, this morning visited The Abbeyfield Malmesbury and Tetbury Society, Tetbury. His Royal Highness, Patron, Cotswold Care Hospice, later visited the Hospice at Minchinhampton. The Prince of Wales, Patron, Sue Ryder Home at Leckhampton Court, subsequently visited the home at Cheltenham, Gloucestershire.

Birthdays today

The Emperor of Japan celebrates his 65th birthday today.

The Earl of Balfour, 73; Sir Franklin Berman, civil servant, 59; Mrs C. Bicknell, former chairman, Victoria Health Authority, 79; Sir Norman Biggs, banker, 91; Lord Blake, FBA, 82; Professor Timothy Burt, Master, Hatfield College, Durham University, 47; Mr David Davis, MP, 50; Sir Peter Davis, chief executive, Prudential Corporation, 57; Mr Maurice Denham, actor, 89; Sir Colin Fielding, former civil servant, 72; Mr J.R.S. Guinness, chairman, British Nuclear Fuels, 63; Mr Yousuf Karsh, photographer, 90; Mr Graham Kelly, former chief executive, Football Association, 53; Professor Peter Lachmann, FRS, former president, Royal College of Pathologists, 67; Miss Belinda Lang, actress, 45; Mr Christopher Lawrence, goldsmith and silversmith, 62; Sir Roger Neville, former chief executive, Sun Alliance Insurance Group, 67; Mr Ashley Raeburn, former chairman, Boosey and Hawkes, 80; Herr Helmut Schmidt, former Chancellor, Federal Republic of Germany, 80; the Rev Christopher Turner, former Headmaster, Stowe School, 69; Mr R.S. Unwin, publisher, 73; the Marquess of Winchester, 57.

Lord Sainsbury

A Service of Thanksgiving for the Life and Work of Lord Sainsbury, of Drury Lane, will be held in St Margaret's Church, Westminster Abbey, at noon on Thursday January 14. Those wishing to attend are asked to apply in writing, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope, to: The Assistant Receiver General (Protocol), Room 14, The Chapter Office, 20 Dean's Yard, Westminster Abbey, London SW1P 3PA. Tickets will be posted by January 7.

Luncheon

HM Government

Mr George Robertson, Secretary of State for Defence, was the host at a luncheon given yesterday by Her Majesty's Government at Admiralty House in honour of Herr Rudolf Scharping, the German Minister for Defence.

Appointments

Animal Procedures Committee

The following have been appointed to the Animal Procedures Committee:

Professor Christopher Atterwill, Mr Michael Baker, Professor Donald Broom, Professor Grahame Bulfield, Professor Stephen Clark, Mr Alan Holland, Professor Colin Johnston, Professor Alan McNeilly and Professor Genevra Richardson.



ALAN WELLER

Sue Butler, from Sutton in South London, was out selling local lavender in Covent Garden yesterday. She is leading a campaign to revive lavender cultivation in the borough, which was famous for its Mitcham lavender in the 19th-century. Foreign competition killed the trade, but interest in aromatherapy and alternative medicine has revived interest in growing the herb commercially. Mitcham lavender will feature on one of the floats in the New Year's Day parade in Central London

Marriages

Captain C.R.V. Walker and Miss K.L. White-Thomson

The marriage took place yesterday in the Guards Chapel, Wellington Barracks, of Captain Roland Walker, son of Mr Patrick Walker, of Nairobi, Kenya, and the late Daphne Marchioness Conyngham, to Miss Kare White-Thomson, daughter of Mr and Mrs Christopher White-Thomson, of White Colne, Essex. The Rev Leslie H. Bryan officiated.

The bride, who was given in marriage by her father, was attended by Alexander Atkinson, Jamie Walker, Laurence Mason and Julia Walker. Major Ben Farrell was best man.

A reception was held at the Army and Navy Club, Pall Mall, and the honeymoon will be spent abroad.

Mr M.L. Hydleman and Mrs H.R. Hackett

The marriage took place on Friday, December 18, 1998, at Leeds Register Office, between Mr Michael Hydleman and Mrs Hilary Hackett. A reception will be held at a later date.

Mr R.N. Weatherby and Miss S.M.S. Horne

The marriage took place on Thursday, December 17, in the Grosvenor Chapel, South Audley Street, of Mr Roger Weatherby, son of Mr and Mrs Christopher Weatherby, to Miss Samantha Horne, daughter of Mr John Horne and Mrs Robin Rumbold. Father Simon Hobbs officiated and the Right Rev Ronald Gordon gave the blessing.

The bride, who was given in marriage by her father, was attended by the Hon Jake Greenall, Elizabeth Hammerton, and Jack and Isabella Weatherby. Mr Simon Akroyd was best man.

A reception was held at Claridge's and the honeymoon will be spent in Mexico.

Lincoln's Inn

Honorary Bencher

The Most Rev Dr R.H.A. Eames, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, has been made an Honorary Bencher of Lincoln's Inn with effect from December 18.

Church news

The Rev Don Laurie, Priest-in-Charge, Ventnor St Catherine, and Ventnor Holy Trinity (Portsmouth): to be Rector, same benefice.

The Rev Basil Munro, Rector, Aston on Trent and Weston on Trent (Derby): has been appointed also Priest-in-Charge, Elvaston and Shardlow (same diocese).

The Rev Keith Robinson, Priest-in-Charge, Laverstock (Salisbury): to be also Rural Dean of Salisbury (same diocese).

Forthcoming marriages

Dr S.O. Beddington-Behrens and Miss A.E. Gordon

The engagement is announced between Serge Obolensky, only son of the late Sir Edward Beddington-Behrens and Princess Irena Obolensky, and Averill Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Mr Ian Gordon and Mrs Una Gordon, of Auckland, New Zealand.

Mr E.J.D. Harris and Miss G.C.S. Gordon

The engagement is announced between Edward, son of Mr and Mrs David Harris, of Geneva, Switzerland, and Georgina, daughter of Mr and Mrs John Gordon, of Newport, Essex.

Mr C.M.D. Jones and Miss F.H. Radford Parker

The engagement is announced between Christopher Mark Duncan, son of Mr and Mrs Antony Jones, of Knightsbridge, London, and Mrs Julie Jones, of St John's Wood, London, and Fiona Helena, daughter of the late Mr Peter Radford Mead and the Earl and Countess, of Macclesfield, of Shirburn Castle, Oxfordshire.

Mr P.S.C. Marshall and Miss S.C. McCulloch

The engagement is announced between Piers, elder son of His Honour Judge Marshall, of Stourton, Warwickshire, and Mrs A. Reynolds, of Chelsea, London, and Susan, daughter of Mrs Felicity McCulloch, of Llanymynech, Shropshire.

Mr E.C.H. Stanger and Miss C.R. Craig

The engagement is announced between Edward, son of Mr and Mrs David Stanger, of Brussels, Belgium, and Camilla, daughter of Mr and Mrs Brian Craig, of Westminster, London.

Mr J.C.G. Turner and Dr J.S. Porter

The engagement is announced between James, son of Mr Nevill Turner, of Virginia, USA, and Mrs Cynthia Turner, of Godstone, Surrey, and Jackie, daughter of Mr and Mrs Derek Porter, of London, SW3.

Mr A. Woodhead and Miss S. Glover

The engagement is announced between Andrew, son of the late Mr Stanley (Tim) Woodhead and of Mrs Woodhead, and Sarah, daughter of Mr and Mrs Ray Glover.

Captain N.R.E. Woolgar and Miss G.C. Biddle

The engagement is announced between Captain Nicholas Woolgar, The Queen's Royal Lancers, only son of Commander R.E. Woolgar, Royal Navy, and Mrs Woolgar, of Alton, Hampshire, and Georgina, twin daughter of Mr and Mrs Donald Biddle, of Shaftesbury, Dorset.

Mr F. Wylie and Miss A. Rainbird

The engagement is announced between Fergus, younger son of Mr and Mrs Kevin Wylie, of Menooth, County Kildare, and Alexis, daughter of Mr and Mrs Geoffrey Rainbird, of Northiam, East Sussex.

Anniversaries

BIRTHS: Sir Richard Arkwright, inventor, Preston, 1732; Sir Martin Archer Shee, painter, Dublin, 1770; Joseph Smith, founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Sharon, Vermont, 1805; Samuel Smiles, author of *Self Help*, Haddington, Lothian, 1812; J. Arthur Rank, 1st Baron Rank, industrialist and film magnate, Hull, 1888.

DEATHS: Thomas Robert Malthus, economist, Bath, 1834; Alexandre Gustave Eiffel, builder of the tower bearing his name, Paris, 1923; Anthony Herman Fokker, aircraft pioneer, New York, 1939; Edward Frederick Lindley Wood, 1st Earl of Halifax, statesman, Viceroy of India 1926-31, Garrowby, Yorkshire, 1959.

HMS Bounty, commanded by William Bligh, set sail for the South Seas, 1787.

Joseph Hansom patented a type of cab, 1834.

The BBC began daily radio broadcasts, 1922.

Church services on Christmas Eve

BRECON CATHEDRAL: 3.30 Blessing of the Crib and E. Noble in B minor, A: O little town of Bethlehem (Walford Davies)

BANGOR CATHEDRAL: 11.30 First mass of Christmas, Canon A Hawkins.

BIRMINGHAM CATHEDRAL: 3.30 EP; 5.30 Festival of nine lessons and carols; 11.30 Midnight mass, Canon G O'Neill.

CARLISLE CATHEDRAL: 3 Crib service; 6.30 Festival of nine lessons and carols; 11.30 Midnight Euch, Stanford in C & F, Archdeacon D Turnbull.

CHELMSFORD CATHEDRAL: 8.15 HC; 8.45 MP; 10 HC; 4 Crib service; 6 Festival of nine lessons and carols; 11.30 Midnight mass.

CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL: 7.30 M; 8 HC; 4.15 Blessing of the crib; 5.30 E; 10.45 Vigil of music and readings; 11.30 Midnight Euch.

CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL: 3 Service of nine lessons and carols.

CHESTER CATHEDRAL: 8 HC; 3.30 Cathedral carol service; 5.30 Children's crib service, Canon J Newsome; 11.30 Midnight Euch, Canon Dr R T Dennis.

COVENTRY CATHEDRAL: 9 MP; 12.40 Midday prayer; 3.30 "Journey to Bethlehem"; 5 EP; 7 The form of a servant.

ELY CATHEDRAL: 7.40 M; 8 HC; 4 Crib service; 6.30 E, Stanford in G; 11.30 First Euch of Christmas, Darke in F, The Lord Bishop.

GUILDFORD CATHEDRAL: 4 Children's Christmas service; 11.45 Midnight Euch.

LEICESTER CATHEDRAL: 7.40 MP; 8 HC; 10.50 Litany; 11 HC; 4 Festival of nine lessons and carols; 11.30 S Euch, Darke in E.

LINCOLN CATHEDRAL: 7.30 M; 8, 10.30 HC; 3 EP; 4 Carol service; 11.30 Midnight mass, Sumsion in F, The infant King (Willcocks).

LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL: 9.30 BBC Radio 4 daily service; 5.30 E, Responses (Rose), Collegium regale (Howells), Tomorrow shall be my dancing day (Gardner); 6.30 Family crib service; 11.30 Miodnight mass.

LLANDAFF CATHEDRAL: 7.30, 11 HC; 3.30 Nine lessons and carols; 6 E; 9.30 Blessing of the crib.

NORWICH CATHEDRAL: 12 Crib service; 3 Christmas carol service; 4 Festival of nine lessons and carols; 5.30 E; 8 Carols with Salvation Army band; 11.15 Midnight Euch.

PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL: 4 Festival of nine lessons and carols; 5.30 E; 8 Carols with the Salvation Army Band; 11.45 Midnight Euch, Messe de Minuit (Charpentier).

ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL: 7.30 M; 8 HC; 1 HC; 3.15 E; 3.45 Blessing of the crib, Responses (Leighton), Stanford in G; 11.30 Midnight mass, Messe solennelle (Langlais).

SHEFFIELD CATHEDRAL: 7.30 MP; 8 Euch; 1 HC; 4 EP; 7 Nine lessons and carols; 11.30 Midnight Euch.

SOUTHWARK CATHEDRAL: 4 Carols at the crib; 11.30 Midnight mass, Missa sancti Nicolai (Haydn).

TRURO CATHEDRAL: 7.30 M; 8 HC; 5.30 EP; 7 Festival of nine lessons and carols; 11.30 Midnight mass, Little organ mass (Haydn), A: Silent night (Morley).

WAKEFIELD CATHEDRAL: 4 Christingle service; 11 Procession to the crib and Midnight mass, Ireland in C.

WELLS CATHEDRAL: 11.30 S Euch, Mass de minuit (Charpentier), The Bishop of Bath and Wells.

WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL: 7, 9, 9, 10.30 Latin Mass; 12.30, LOS Mass; 4.15 Sol Pontifical first Vespers of Christmas, Magnificat octavi toni (Bevan); 5.30 Vigil Mass with carols; 11.15 Sol Vigil and midnight mass, Missa sancti Nicolai (Haydn), Hodie Christus natus est (Schütz).

WESTMINSTER ABBEY: 7.30 MP; 8, 12.30 HC; 3.30 EP; 4 Service of lessons and carols; 11.30 S Euch of Christmas midnight, Messe solennelle (Langlais), Very Rev Dr W Carr.

WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL: 12 HC; 3 Children's service; 5.30 E with blessing of the crib, Dyson in E minor; 11.30 Midnight Euch, Break forth O beauteous heavenly light (Bach), Coronation mass (Mozart), Three Kings (Cornelius).

WORCESTER CATHEDRAL: 7.45 M; 8 HC; 11.30 Crib service, Rev Dr M Dorsett; 5.30 EP; 11.30 Midnight Euch, O magnum mysterium (Gabrieli), Coronation mass (Mozart), I wonder as I wander (Hunt), Canon D Thomas.

ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL: 7.30 M; 8 HC; 1 Family carols; 2.30 E; 4 Christmas carol service and blessing of the crib; 11.30 Midnight Euch, Missa sancti Nicolai (Haydn), Canon S Oliver.

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH, Honingham, Norfolk: 11.30 Midnight mass.

ST ASAPH: 8 MP; 6.30 Christmas carol service, Adam lay y bounden (Boris Ord); 11.30 Midnight Euch, Darke in F, Very Rev K Goulstone.

ST DAVID'S CATHEDRAL, Pembrokeshire: 7.30 MP; 9 HC; 4.15 EP; 11.30 First Euch of Christmas, Schubert in G, Away in a manger (Willcocks).

ST LUKE'S CHURCH: 4 Crib service for young children; 11.30 Midnight Euch, Rev C Kevill-Davies.

ST MACHAR'S CATHEDRAL, Old Aberdeen: 11 Festal service of nine lessons and carols.

ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL, Glasgow: 11.30 Midnight mass, Four part mass (Byrd).

PARISH OF ST ALBAN THE MARTYR, EC1: 11.40 Midnight carols, Mozart in G major, Hodie Christus natus est (Sweelinck), Canon H Levett; 11 S mass.

ST PETER'S, Eaton Square, SW1: 5 Crib service for children; 11.30 Midnight mass and blessing of the crib, Missa sancti Nicolai (Haydn), Laudate Dominum (Mozart), Father D B Tillyer.

ST WOOLOS CATHEDRAL, Newport: 3 Nine lessons and carols; 11.30 Christmas Euch.

ALL SAINTS, W1: 11 HM, Missa sancti Nicolai (Haydn).

ALL SOULS CHURCH: 11 Communion service, Rev P Blackham.

THE ASSUMPTION, W1: 11.30 Carols, Messe de minuit (Charpentier).

CHELSEA OLD CHURCH, SW3: 4.30 Christingle service; 11.45 Midnight C.

CROWN COURT OF SCOTLAND, WC2: 11.30 Watchnight service.

FARM STREET, W1: 11.30 Midnight service, Nicolai messe (Haydn), Dies sanctificatus (Palestrina).

HOLY TRINITY, BROMPTON, SW7: 11.30 Midnight C, Rev R Thorpe.

WESTMINSTER CENTRAL HALL (Methodist): 11.15 Midnight C, Rev Dr P Graves.

ST BARTHOLOMEW THE GREAT: 9 HC; 11 Ch Euch, 12.30 HC; 11.45 Midnight mass, Mozart in C.

ST BRIDE'S CHURCH, EC4: 11.30 Candlelight Midnight mass, Mozart in B flat.

ST CLEMENT DANES, WC2: 11.30 Ch Euch, Mozart in C, Rev D Mackenzie.

ST COLUMBA'S CHURCH OF SCOTLAND: 11.30 Candlelight service.

ST ETHELREDA'S, EC1: 11.30 Carols and Midnight mass, Messe solennelle (Gounod), Quem vidistis (Dering).

ST JAMES'S, W1: 11.30 Midnight Euch, Rev H Valentine.

ST JAMES'S CHURCH, W2: 11.30 S Euch, Mozart in C, Rev A Meldrum.

ST JOHN'S CHURCH, E15: 11 Midnight C, Rev D Richards.

ST LUKE'S, SW3: 4 Crib service for young children; 11.30 Midnight Euch, Rev C Kevill-Davies.

ST MARK'S, NW1: 11.30 Midnight mass, Missa ad praesepe (Malcolm), Rev A Andrews.

ST MARTIN IN THE FIELDS: 6.30 Carol service, Rev R Priestley; 11.30 Midnight mass.

ST MARYLEBONE PARISH CHURCH: 11.30 Midnight mass, Missa sancti Nicolai (Haydn), Professor J Caldwell.

ST PAUL'S, SW1: 11.30 Sol Euch, Mozart in C, Rev C Courtauld.

ST PETER'S, SW1: 5 Crib service for children; 11.30 Midnight mass, Missa sancti Nicolai (Haydn), Father D B Tillyer.

CHAPEL ROYAL, HAMPTON COURT PALACE: 11 Midnight mass.

CHAPELS ROYAL OF ST PETER AD VINCULA AND ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST, HM TOWER OF LONDON: 11.30 Midnight HC, Rev P R C Abram.

ST COLUMBA'S CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, SW1: 11.30 Candlelight service.

ST CLEMENT DANES: 11.30 Ch Euch, Mozart in C, O magnum mysterium (Byrd), Rev D MacKenzie.

WESTMINSTER CENTRAL HALL: 11.15 Midnight C, Rev Dr P Graves.

FARM STREET, W1: 11.30 Midnight service, Nicolaimesse (Haydn), Dies sanctificatus (Palestrina).

ST PETER'S VICARAGE, NW3: 12 HC; 4 Children's crib service; 11.30 Midnight mass.

CHAPEL ROYAL OF ST PETER AD VINCULA, HM Tower of London: 11.30 HC, Rev P R C Abram.

CHAPEL ROYAL, Hampton Court Palace: 11 Midnight mass of the Nativity.

GUARDS CHAPEL, Wellington Barracks, SW1: 11.15 Carols at the manger; 11.30 Midnight HC, Gant in D, A: What child is this? (Gant).

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Let Israel look for the Lord, for in the Lord is love unfailing, and great is his power to deliver. Psalm 130:7

BIRTHS

BEVAN-THOMAS - On 17th December, in Tallahassee Florida, to Paul and Carolyn Rogers, a son, Andrew Rogers Bevan-Thomas.

BRACKEN - On December 21st 1998, to Sarah (née Braybrook) and Charlie, a second son, George Edward Hamer, a brother for Charlie.

BRONIEM - On December 15th at The Portland Hospital to Elvira Barroso and Jeff, a daughter, Georgina Milena.

COLLINS - On 10th December to Charlotte (née Le Vay Lawrence) and Andrew, a son Henry, a brother for Miranda.

COWAN - On December 19th at St. Michael's Hospital, Bristol, to Helen (née Carter) and to David, a son, Jacob Benjamin.

CROSBY - On December 21st 1998, to Jane (née King) and Tom, a daughter, Hanna Jane, a sister for Benjamin.

EDMONDES - On 10th December in Muscat, Oman, to Susan (née Hyde) and Nicholas, twins, Matthew Thomas Gustav and Louis Frederick Irving, brothers for Agatha (Taggie) and Patrick.

GARVIN - On December 18th to Emma (née Parker) and James, a daughter, Katharine Lucy, a sister for Ellen and Alexander.

MAJUMDAR - On December 2nd 1998, to Shantanu and Philippa Hart, a bonny daughter Ava Kathleen Esther, a sister for Mycroft.

BIRTHS

MARTIN - On 14th December to Heather and Ken, a daughter, Agnes Wilhelmina.

MAX - On November 29th at The Portland Hospital to Zoe and Robert, a son, Noah, a brother for Sophie.

MOUFARRIGE - On December 19th at The Portland Hospital to Tania Bryer and Tim, a daughter, Natasha Joy.

OSBORNE - On 29th November at Bristol Maternity Hospital to Sue and Clarice, a son, Thomas William Belveston, a brother for Eloise.

RIGG - On 16th December, to Julie (née Forsyth) and Jeremy, a daughter Georgina Elizabeth Laura.

WOOLLEY - On 20th December to Sonja and Martin, a son, Reuben Thomas.

DEATHS

ALLEN - On 19th December 1998 peacefully at West Abbey Nursing Home, Eileen Marjorie (née Danger). Loved and loving wife of the late Brigadier Richard Malpas Allen and loved mother of Sue Graham. Funeral 11.30am 6th January 1999 at the Church of SS Peter & Paul, Chiselborough and afterwards at Yeovil Crematorium. No flowers. Enquiries A E Stoodley & Son Funeral Directors Crewkerne Somerset Tel: 01460 73229.

DEATHS

CRACKNELL - Elizabeth Ann, aged 65 years. Died peacefully at Princess Margaret Hospital, Swindon, on 19th December. Much loved wife of Edwin and mother of Joanne, Gillian and Alison (deceased). Devoted sister to Jean and Moira. Grandmother to Katherine, Alice, William, Daisy, Charlie, Fiona and Lily. Private family cremation. Enquiries to Hillier Funeral Services, 170 Victoria Road, Swindon.

CROSSE - Jean PhD DSc aged 79 years on the 19th December. Beloved husband of Betty and father of Jana, Penny and Jesse, grandfather of Joanna, Benjamin, Zoe, Alex and the late Ewan. He will be sadly missed by all his family and friends. Funeral service at Bodicote Parish Church on Wednesday, 30th December at 2.00 pm. Family flowers only please, but donations if desired for the Ewan Sampson Scholarship Trust c/o J&M Humphris, 32 Albert Street, Banbury OX16 5DG.

DUCKER - Frances Eleanor (née Gielgud) died peacefully on December 19th 1998 aged 91 years.

FREEDMAN - Louis Freedman CBE peacefully at home on December 21st, an event in his memory will be arranged at a later date.

GROSVENOR - Hugh Norman Wilshaw died peacefully at home on December 21st aged 90. Beloved husband of Stella Athalie married 58 years. Funeral on 30th December at 3.00pm at Golders Green Crematorium, donations if desired to Alzheimers Society.

HOBBS - Marguerite (née Lepper) died December 19th, Cape Town. Requiem mass at Villa Maria Chapel, Kloof Street, Cape Town, 11.00 am Thursday December 24th.

HOLLYWOOD - Patrick Joseph, much loved husband, father and grandfather. Funeral 24th December at 11.15am, Our Lady of Fatima, Harlow. Donations if desired to The Alzheimer's Disease Society.

HOMBERGER - Mary on 19th December aged 88. Much loved wife, mother, sister, aunt and grandmother. She will be greatly missed by her family and friends. Funeral 3.15pm at Holy Trinity Bromley, Wednesday 23rd December. All welcome. Contributions to RNIB if desired.

HUNTLEY - Penelope wife of William Huntley and mother of Richard and James, passed peacefully away at Musgrove Park Hospital Taunton, on 16th December 1998, aged 49 years. The funeral service takes place at Ruishton Parish Church, Taunton, today, Wednesday 23rd December, at 12.30pm followed by Interment. White flowers only may be sent to the funeral directors Nigel K. Ford, North End, Creech St. Michael, Taunton.

LECKIE - Vera Edinburgh. Peacefully after breakfast at Spring Gardens Nursing Home on December 19th 1998 Vera F Leckie (née Bennett) beloved mother of Susan Angella, much loved granny of Thano, Tammy and Damien. Funeral on Tuesday December 29th to Warriston Crematorium Edinburgh where a service will be held in the Cloister Chapel at 11.50 to which all friends and all who remember her are invited.

McLEAN - Sir Francis Charles McLean KB CBE, quietly in a local nursing home on December 19th aged 94 years. Former Director of Engineering - British Broadcasting Corporation. Service at Basingstoke Crematorium, December 29th at 11.15am, no flowers.

PLUMMER - The Lady Pitzmaur of St. Marylebone (Pat) dearly beloved wife of Desmond and dearest mother of Sally, suddenly and peacefully at home on Sunday December 20th. No flowers please but donations if desired to the Macular Disease Society P.O. Box 247 Haywards Heath RH17 5FF.

POWELL-JONES - Robert James at York on 17th December aged 44. Beloved son of Ann Fabudan and John Powell-Jones and father of Stella. Funeral at St George's Church, George Street, York on 24th December at 11 am.

RIESCO - Michael Raymond, on 21st December 1998, peacefully at King Edwards VII Hospital, Midhurst. Dearly loved father of Jane and Phillip, father-in-law of Lindy and grandfather of Polly, Katie, Elis and Anna. Service and cremation will take place at Worthing Crematorium on Wednesday December 30th at 2.40pm. Family flowers only. Donations if desired to The Friends of King Edwards VII Hospital.

SCRIVENOR - Sir Thomas Vaisey KtCMG, died peacefully aged 90 on Sunday 20th December 1998. Beloved husband of Elizabeth, dearly loved father of Phoebe, Patrick, Ann and Gillian. Much loved grandfather and great-grandfather. Funeral Service Thursday 31st December at 2.00 o'clock St Kenalm's Church, Minster Lovell Oxfordshire. Family flowers only please, donations if desired to Mencap.

SHEPHERD - Colin Edward James, on 20th December. Requiem Mass at St. Augustine's, Tunbridge Wells, 10.30am, Wednesday 30th December. No flowers but donations if wished to Imperial Cancer Research.

STOCKER - Sheila Guiscard, aged 88, peacefully on 19th December. Devoted wife of the late Harry and much loved mother of David, Oliver, Karen and Nesta; grandmother and great-grandmother.

STEPHEN - On December 20th 1998, peacefully at Abingdon Hospital, Dr James Henry Stephen (Jim), aged 74 years, dearly loved husband of Marjorie and much loved father of John and Kathy. Funeral Service at Oxford Crematorium on Wednesday December 30th at 2.30pm. Family flowers only please. Donations if desired for the Abingdon Community Hospital c/o Edward Carter (FD), 107 South Avenue, Abingdon, OX14 1QS.

WATERS - Graham aged 32 died suddenly on December 21st 1998. Dearly loved husband of Lorna, father of Julie, Sarah, Alison and James and devoted grandfather. Private cremation followed by Memorial Service at St Mary's Church, Rolvenden, Kent. Tuesday 29th December 1998 at 12 noon. Family flowers only.

WINDERANK - Peter Crichton, former R.N.V.R. died 20th December 1998 aged 73 years at home in Chislehurst, Kent. Funeral Service 10.00 am 4th January 1999 St Nicholas Parish Church, Chislehurst, followed by cremation. Family flowers only. Donations to St Christopher's Hospice, Sydenham SE26 or South Bromley HospiceCare c/o Orpington Hospital, Kent.

WYNN-WILLIAMS - David, M.S., F.R.C.S., on Monday 21st December quietly at home after a short illness bravely borne. Beloved husband and father of Anne and Rhydain. Private cremation.

WETHERIDGE - Anthony Gilbert, Colonel (retired) 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars, M.A. Cantab, Post Grad. Dunelm. Devoted son of George, doting husband of Françoise, proud and loving father of Simon, Pip, Ann and Clare. Serenely at home, on December 19th 1998, aged 61. Funeral at Saint Mary the Virgin, Charlton Marshall, Dorset on Tuesday, December 29th 1998 at 2.30pm. No flowers please but donations to the Dorset Cancer Care Trust or to Charlton Marshall Church, c/o Colin J. Close, 7A Market Place, Blandford, Dorset DT11 7AU.

DIAMOND ANNIVERSARIES

GIBSON-HUME - On 23rd December 1938 Lieut (E) Peter Gibson RN to Phyllis Hume at St. Mary's SW3 now at Pangmere RG18 0TE.

BIRTHDAYS

COOKE - Congratulations to Nancy on this, her very first birthday. Love from Ian Guest-parents.

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OBITUARIES

THE REV LORD SOPER

The Rev Lord Soper, Methodist minister, died yesterday aged 95. He was born on January 31, 1903.

A former president of the Methodist conference, Donald Soper was one of the most recognisable churchmen of the century. He was famous for his open-air preaching, his pacifism, his active concern for the homeless and his support for nuclear disarmament — this last culminating in his statement (made as early as 1950) that he would rather see the world overrun by communism than run the risk of a third world war. This sentiment caused some offence even in Methodist circles, and it was only by the skin of his teeth that Soper was three years later elected president of the Methodist Conference. But official positions meant little to him, and it was undoubtedly as an evangelist — or what John Wesley called "a travelling preacher" — that he would have wished to be remembered.

For nearly 60 years, even in gale-force winds, lashing downpours and snow storms, he preached every week in the open air, on Wednesdays at Tower Hill and on Sundays at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park. Calm, lucid and succinct, he had a gift for words and tremendous pace and power of delivery. His great gift was for repartee, and the hecklers and interrupters — whom he would alternately tease and crush — soon became an integral part of his performance.

In 1927, when he started out at Tower Hill, the questions tended to be about the terrors of hell and the mysteries of the Christian faith. By the 1990s they embraced sex, abortion and homosexuality. He did not like the change. "When someone asks a question about sex in Hyde Park," he would complain, "you double the crowd and halve the argument."

But his sense of mission was not confined to his role as an open-air preacher. For more than 40 years he was the presiding minister at the Kingsway Hall, successfully practising there a kind of inner city welfare Methodism long after its time had passed elsewhere. Crèches, luncheon clubs, hostels and homes (each designed for different categories, ranging from ex-prisoners to reformed prostitutes) all came under the umbrella of what was known as the West London Mission.

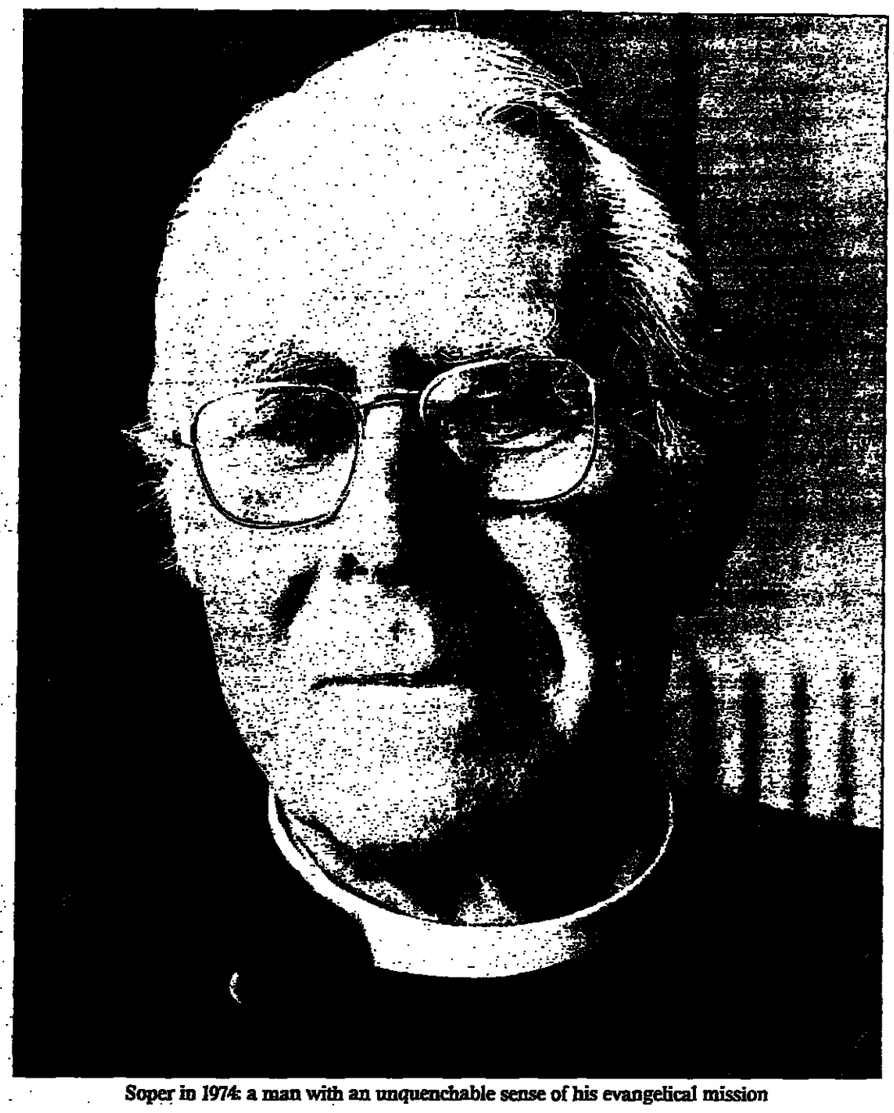
At least until the beginning of the 1960s something like four hundred people would turn up at Kingsway Hall to hear him preach each Sunday morning and anything up to a thousand in the evening. It was a remarkable achievement, prolonging the spell of such former famous Nonconformist divines as W. E. Sangster at Central Hall, Westminster, or Leslie D. Weatherhead at the City Temple, years after their time had gone.

But Soper remained very much a political figure as well as a spiritual one. For two decades and more he wrote a regular weekly column in the left-wing weekly *Tribune*, and he was the natural choice of the Labour Party to preside over the pre-session services that used to be held in the Crypt Chapel of the House of Commons.

He was 62 when Harold Wilson, in 1965, gave him a life peerage and put him — the first Methodist minister ever to sit there — in the House of Lords. Despite his years, his mother thought it appropriate to offer him some advice. She wrote, pointing out the pitfalls involved in joining the Upper House, adding the warning: "Remember first and last that you are a Methodist minister." When Soper turned up in his usual attire, a well-cut cassock, he incurred the Presbyterian wrath of a member of the other House, the Rev Ian Paisley. Inevitably, the problem was put to a committee, and it eventually found that Soper's garb did not amount to the introduction of Popish practices into their Lordships' House.

Throughout his life Donald Soper was controversial, campaigning against what he saw as injustices at home and abroad. Gambling, blood sports, child labour and inadequate help for the poor were all targets he returned to again and again. Many of the bodies he attacked ignored him. But sometimes his words got a totally unexpected response. Soon after he criticised the Queen for going racing — mixing with gamblers, drinkers and the like — he found himself the first Methodist minister to be invited to preach at Sandringham.

In the early 1960s he served for a few years as an alderman on the old London County Council and got very angry when the LCC leader, Sir Isaac Hayward, made it a rule that there was to be no writing to the press and no leaking of the decisions made by the ruling Labour group behind closed doors. Soper responded by telling Sir Isaac, that he wished "to attack, criticise, repudiate and denounce" what he saw as "an abominable rule". He added that he hoped that these words "taken together will give an unambiguous impression of where I stand".



Soper in 1974: a man with an unquenchable sense of his evangelical mission

Yet he could be tactful, a tact often laced with wit and charm. When asked to conduct the service before a Labour Party conference, he assured the congregation that he would not resist the temptation to give them good advice, however much he felt that they did not need it.

His own brand of left-wing politics was — nuclear disarmament apart — very close to the position adopted by Aneurin Bevan, whom he had first met through *Tribune*. In the month of Bevan's death in 1960 Soper conducted his memorial service high on the hills above Tredegar precisely at the spot where the young Bevan had begun practising his public speaking as a boy. But in his later years Soper's constituency widened and he became, in effect, chaplain by appointment to the whole of the Labour movement.

Donald Oliver Soper was born in Wandsworth. His father, Ernest Soper, was an average adjuster in marine insurance in the City of London and his mother a petite, intense schoolmistress. It was a strict religious background. On Sundays the family went to church a couple of times and only "Sunday literature" was allowed — the one escape from "devotional reading", he used to recall, came "when father would say that it was a good idea to go to bed early on Sundays".

Educated at Aske's School, Hatcham, he left there with an emotional scar that was to stay with him all his life. Bowling his third ball on a very hard pitch in a cricket match, he saw to his horror his delivery bound up and hit the batsman above the heart, instantly killing him. That tragedy did not stop him, however, from going on to be "irritatingly successful" at both work and games (he became captain of boxing, cricket and football).

At Cambridge, where he went up to St Catharine's College in 1921, his progress continued. He played hockey once or twice for the university and took a first in Part I of the History Tripos, following it up with a first in the philosophy of religion in Part II. A few years later, when already ordained, he enrolled at the London School of Economics, where his thesis on the Gallican Church and Ultramontanism successfully won him a PhD. In 1966 St Catharine's made him an honorary fellow and in 1988 Cambridge University awarded him an honorary DD.

He first became a Methodist minister because, as he used wryly to recall, his father told him that this was what he wished him to be. But he soon discovered his vocation, and it never left him: even when his active career was over he would protest "in my work there is no retirement". Remarkably, in his long life as a minister he held only three jobs: the South London Mission, Lambeth, under Scott Lidgett, 1926-29; the Central London Mission, Islington, 1929-36; and Superintendent of the West London Mission, 1936-78. When he retired from this last post at 75 there was really no alternative to closing down the whole operation, something that understandably distressed him. But congregations had dramatically dwindled, the building (already partially sold) was in a bad state and, autocrat to the end, he had made no effort at all to train up a successor. He at least had the consolation of seeing part of the West London Mission's work continue under the aegis of the lively Hinde Street Chapel in St Marylebone.

Soper found his last years difficult, not least because of the increasing grip arthritis gained upon him. Before he was forced to give up entirely, he was having to be lifted manually onto his soapbox and later was reduced to addressing small clutches of people from his wheelchair. He continued writing, but this had never really been his forte. His publications, though, certainly spanned his whole ministry, starting with *Christianity and its Critics* (1937) and ending with *Calling for Action* (1984). There were seven or eight other books of sermons and broadcast talks along the way.

His one great disappointment was perhaps that he never became an Anglican priest. At the time of the Anglican-Methodist reunion negotiations of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the plans were certainly laid for him — in a symbolic gesture — to be ordained as deacon and priest on the same day, with a view to his immediately sharing the ministry with an Anglican incumbent in a well-known London church. Intended as a trailblazing action, it was thwarted when the then Bishop of London, Robert Stopford, failed to show much enthusiasm and it went on finally to founder when the reunion scheme collapsed as a result of not getting the requisite two-thirds majority in the General Synod in 1972.

In 1929 Soper married an Anglican, Marie Dean, who was then only 20. It was an unusual romance. He had fallen in love with her four years earlier, but she had, inconveniently, fallen in love not only with him but also with his brother, Meredith. She took all of four years to make up her mind which Soper she wished to marry. Yet it remained a very happy marriage until her death in 1994. Lord Soper is survived by their four daughters.

DOROTHY WHITE

Dorothy White, OBE, campaigner for the elderly, died on November 26 aged 74. She was born on October 13, 1924.

FROM the early years of the National Health Service through to the 1990s, Dorothy White was involved in the provision of care for the elderly, both public and voluntary. Having helped to set up the homes that replaced workhouses after the war, she was still contributing ideas shortly before her death, giving evidence to the Royal Commission on the Care of the Elderly. She also was the founder and first president of the Relatives Association.

Born Dorothy Marian Gerrish, she was the daughter of a clothing manufacturer with a Nonconformist background, and was educated at St Swithun's School, Winchester. A talented sportswoman, she played at Junior Wimbledon and had been selected to tour



Australia with the England women's cricket team before the tour was cancelled on the outbreak of war.

She then went to the London School of Economics at its wartime home in Cambridge, graduating in 1945. (She was later to be the first Webb Fellow at the LSE, doing research into maternity services in south London.) Shortly after VE-Day she married John White.

After the war she worked in the Ministry of Health during the period when the NHS was being established. In particular, she was involved in the setting up of old people's homes.

Leaving the Civil Service after the birth of her third son, she worked variously as a youth club leader, a teacher and as a management lecturer at the North West London Polytechnic.

In 1966 she rejoined the Civil Service, at the Department of Education and Science, where for some time, she was one of the key advisers to Margaret Thatcher. A wide gulf separated their political views, but she nevertheless felt a considerable admiration for Thatcher.

White took early retirement from the Department of Education in 1979 in order to become director of the Family Planning Association, but her new career was cut short by an attack of peritonitis. Obliged to resign, she next helped to set up Barnet's Voluntary Service Council, which she went on to chair from 1981 to 1987.

She also set up and chaired the borough's care attendant and drug concern schemes. She was an active member of the Barnet Community Health Council, and a consultant to — and later director of — the Network Housing Association for Residential and Nursing Homes.

Her concern for the elderly now had a very practical basis in her attentive care for her own increasingly incapacitated mother. Her meditation on the stresses borne by those who look after others led to her foundation of the Relatives Association. Now a national charity, this campaigns for improvements in residential care.

In 1993 Dorothy White she was appointed OBE, and in 1997 she won the Guardian Jerwood Award. She is survived by her husband and three sons.

Eprime Eshag, economist, died on November 24 aged 80. He was born in northern Iran on November 6, 1918.

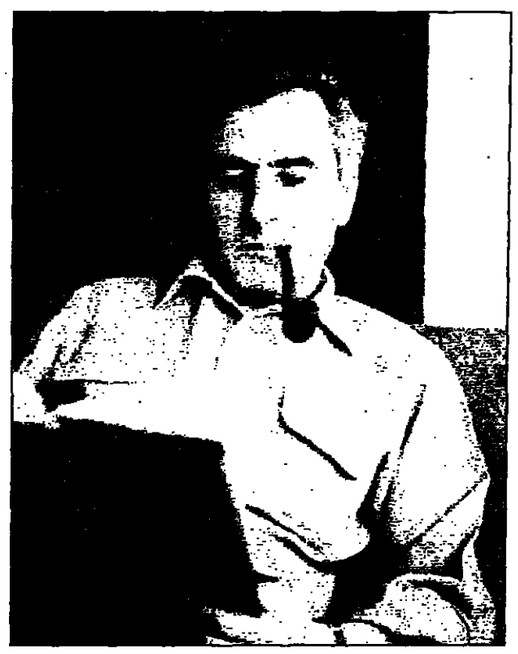
EPRIME ESHAG was one of the first generation of Keynesian socialist economists. Born into an Assyrian, Nestorian Christian family, he inherited all the radical fervour but repudiated the religion of his father, a clergyman frequently at odds with his own religious establishment.

After an unsettled and often dangerous early life, including some years as a refugee in the Soviet Union, he won a scholarship in 1936 from Tehran to train as a chartered accountant in England, so escaping imminent arrest for political activities.

He enrolled at the London School of Economics to study in his spare time, and when war came he followed the LSE in its evacuation to Cambridge, where he encountered the leading lights of the Keynesian revolution, particularly Joan Robinson.

In 1945 he returned to Iran, but his trade union activity displeased his bank employers. He was justly suspicious of the left-wing Tudeh Party's subservience to Soviet influence, and he also lost friends in that quarter by writing two constructively critical articles. He then returned to Cambridge, where he finished his study of the Cambridge school's monetary thinking *From Marshall to Keynes*.

In 1953 he moved to the UN Secretariat, where one of his colleagues was his other great hero, Michael Kalecki. In the McCarthyite climate of the time Eshag was not alone in resenting the extent of American interference with the secretariat's autonomy.



Eshag: passionate opponent of postwar economic theory

In 1960 he was sent as part of the civil mission to the Congo. There he considered the UN policy to be much too close to that of the advanced nations which had reduced that country to such a plight, and he wrote a damning report which again brought him into conflict with higher authorities.

So in 1962 he accepted the post of senior research officer at the Institute of Economics and Statistics in Oxford, which he held, along with a fellowship at Wadham, until his retirement. He continued to write articles on developing countries, and his book *Fiscal and Monetary Policies and Problems in Developing Countries* appeared in 1983. He also contributed trenchantly in pamphlets and newspaper articles to debates on British macro-economic policy.

Although he always emphasised his Keynesian roots, he was in truth more in sympathy with Kalecki. He sympathised with Kalecki's socialist rather than Keynes's liberal motivation, and whereas Keynes was famously optimistic about the power of ideas over vested interests, Eshag — like Kalecki — never doubted that the reality was otherwise. Socialist policymakers, he thought, would always have a bitter struggle against vested interests, and the Keynesian revolution itself would ultimately produce a backlash in the form of monetarism.

A passionate supporter of the dispossessed against establishments in every form, he was an obdurate opponent of much postwar economic theory, which, he felt, neglected the interplay between political power and income distribution. Nevertheless, he was no Marxist revolutionary: in his writings and teaching he used little Marxist analysis, and rather than revolution he hoped that socialist policymakers would coax a democratic mixed economy ever closer to full employment with an ever more extended welfare state.

In college he was a forthright tutor and a high-profile member of the common room. Though his relations with authority in his native country remained uneasy, he was instrumental in obtaining Iranian finance for Wadham's spacious new library and for Iranian studies. Always a devotee of beautiful women, he married Linda Lewis late in life, to the delight of his friends. She survives him, having been a selfless support in his final illness. There were no children.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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THANK YOU St. Jude for favours granted. Thank you St. Anthony for favours granted. Thank you Holy Spirit for favours granted. Thank you Infant Jesus for favours granted. Thank you Mother Mary for favours granted. P.K.

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THE TIMES
CHRISTMAS PERIOD
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PUBLICATION DATE — DEADLINE
Saturday 26th December — 12 noon, Thursday 24th December
Monday 28th December — 12 noon, Thursday 24th December
Tuesday 29th December — 12 noon, Monday 28th December
Wednesday 30th December — 2.15pm, Tuesday 29th December
Thursday 31st December — 2.15pm, Wednesday 30th December
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THE TIMES
CHRISTMAS PERIOD
Deadlines & Opening times
Birth, Marriage & Death Notices
For notices to appear on Thursday December 24th, the deadline is Wednesday December 23rd at 12 noon.
Friday December 25th OFFICE CLOSED
Saturday December 26th OFFICE CLOSED
The office will be open on Monday December 28th from 9.00am to 11.30am
Normal hours on Tuesday December 29th and Wednesday December 30th
Tel: 0171 680 6880.

PIGEON-SHOOTING BEGINS AGAIN

From our correspondent

MONTE CARLO, Dec 21.

Pigeon-shooting began again on Monday below the Casino terrace as before. The promise made in 1920 to remove the shoot to French territory near Cap d'Aib has not yet been fulfilled.

It is apparently the intention of the Casino authorities to maintain the present position, as considerable enlargements and improvements have been made during the summer. The restaurant has been enlarged and redecorated, and the accommodation for spectators has been increased. The bookmakers' quarters have been completely altered and provided with a table for calculations and a glass weather-screen. The ladies' stand has also been covered in. But the most extraordinary development is the installation of a cinema, where competitors and the public may see films of all kinds of shooting and hunting before and after matches and during the intervals. This cinema occupies the old side of the dog kennels, which are now nearer the lawn. An expert has summed up the situation as follows:- "We find now an organization that leaves nothing to be desired. Everything is ready. Excellent birds rest in the immense pigeon houses. All that the hand and intelligence of man can do has been done. Let the tutelary gods undertake the rest, and all will be for the best in the best of pigeon shoots."

The entrance fees have been reduced to 25f per competition. To this measure, officially described as intelligent, is ascribed the appearance of new competitors at the very outset, which is regarded as a good augury for the future. There were fourteen competitors for the second shoot yesterday.

ON THIS DAY

December 23, 1922

The paper does not appear to have recorded if this "sport", which it campaigned against, was ever abandoned at Monte Carlo.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir, - The Riviera season is close at hand. British people are choosing the places for their annual visits. The Casino authorities of Monte Carlo are also preparing ther programme of amusements and "sport".

May we therefore, be allowed to remind your readers of the horrible cruelties of pigeon-shooting at Monte Carlo, so powerfully exposed in recent years, both in your news columns and in many letters written to you by persons of known position? May we emphasize the fact that these cruelties are perpetrated, day by day, in the very heart of the fashionable life of Monte Carlo, and that a visitor can no more refuse to hear the perpetual crackle of the guns than to breathe the air or admire the scenery?

It is certain that many English people have in recent years refrained from visiting Monte Carlo on account of the distress occasioned to themselves by the shooting. The season was a poor one last year. We think that future seasons will be the same until the Casino terraces are plunged of the sight, and the whole of Monte Carlo of the noise, of this so-called sport.

We are, Sir, your obedient servants,

Pamela McKenna, H W Massingham Russell, C W Saleeby, J A Spender, T B Napier.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Blair stands by Mandelson

Tony Blair was last night standing alongside Peter Mandelson as he surveyed the damage caused by the revelation that one of his closest confidants had accepted a £373,000 loan from Geoffrey Robinson, the embattled Treasury Minister.
The Prime Minister was said to regard the situation as "a mess" that could have been avoided if the Trade Secretary had disclosed at an earlier stage that he had been lent the money to buy his new home in Notting Hill.....Pages 1, 2, 3

Kuwaiti airbases may ban British jets

The aircraft carrier *Invincible* is being moved to the Gulf because Britain fears it will not be allowed to use Kuwaiti airbases to launch future bombing missions on Iraq. The Kuwaitis have been condemned by neighbours for providing their airbases for the launch of RAF and American warplanes.....Page 1

Branson's China ally

Richard Branson's round-the-world balloon attempt weathered another crisis as he was finally granted safe passage through China, with a little help from our man in Beijing.....Page 1

Lord Soper dies

Lord Soper, the veteran Labour peer and Methodist soapbox preacher, died at his London home yesterday after a long illness.....Page 4

The Bill star cleared

The actor William Murray, who stars in *The Bill*, has been cleared of a vigilante-style attack on two men whom he believed were supplying drugs to his 14-year-old daughter. A jury took 90 minutes to clear Mr Murray.....Page 5

'Eyesores' protected

Modern buildings, including 1960s council estates condemned as eyesores by their tenants, were given listed status by the Government. The awards, which recognise design and craftsmanship, represent the culmination of a seven-year project to protect postwar landmarks.....Page 6

Diana fund attacked

The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund was bitterly attacked yesterday by one of its staff for failing to support her former butler, Paul Burrell. Jacqueline Allen said it was "tragic" that he had lost his job.....Page 7

Omagh victim home

Tracey Devine, whose 18-month-old daughter died in the Omagh bombing, was the last victim of Northern Ireland's deadliest atrocity to be released from hospital yesterday.....Page 8

Anti-Semitism rise

About 20 per cent of Germans are latently anti-Semitic, according to an opinion survey published today. The report coincides with a sharp increase in anti-Semitic crimes in Berlin — in particular a bomb attack on the grave of one of the country's former leading Jewish representatives.....Page 9

Israel's new Rabin

Even before declaring his candidacy, the former Israeli military leader Amnon Lipkin-Shahak is being hailed as a future Prime Minister in the mould of the late Yitzhak Rabin.....Page 10

Bombs hit and miss

The Ministry of Defence has admitted that 15 per cent of the weapons launched by RAF Tornado bombers into Iraq missed their intended target during the four-day air campaign.....Page 11

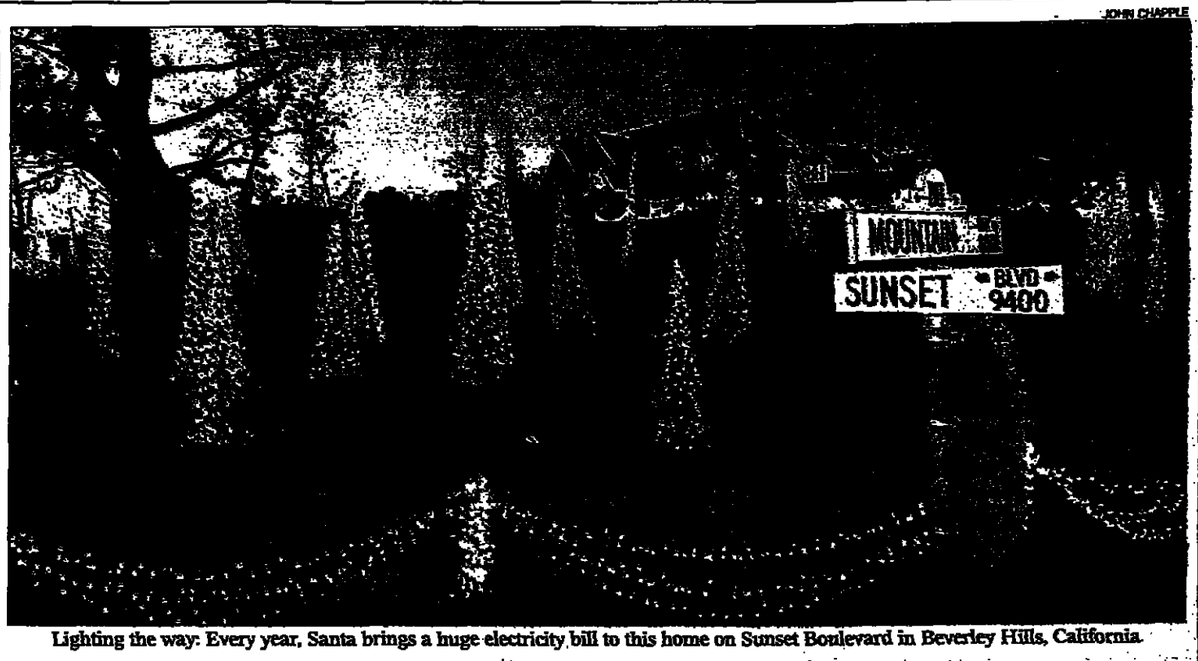
Clinton a 'hypocrite'

President Clinton was urged yesterday to call off anti-Republican "attack dogs". He was told that his failure to do so amounted to hypocrisy, given his plea for an end to "the politics of personal destruction".....Page 11

Ramadan 'gift' is not well received

The Pentagon has condemned "thoughtless graffiti" about Ramadan that was scrawled on the side of a bomb to be dropped on Iraq by a US Navy jet. The inscription said: "Here's a Ramadan present from Chad Rickenberg". The graffiti was seen in a photograph transmitted by the American Associated Press from the aircraft carrier *USS Enterprise*.....Page 11

JOHN CHAPPLE



Lighting the way: Every year, Santa brings a huge electricity bill to this home on Sunset Boulevard in Beverley Hills, California

BUSINESS

GEC overhaul: GEC has prepared the ground for its expected merger with British Aerospace with plans for a radical overhaul of its business.....Page 19
Sears bid: Philip Green intends to seek control of Sears next month by calling an extraordinary shareholder meeting aimed at ousting Sir Bob Reid from the helm.....Page 19
Ice cream: Walls, Britain's largest ice-cream seller, is being investigated by the Office of Fair Trading amid claims that it has abused its market position through its exclusive shop freezers.....Page 19
Markets: The FTSE 100 index fell 33.20 points to 5843.3. The pound fell 0.29 cents to $1.6780 and 0.2 pfennig to DM2.8105. The sterling index fell to 101.1.....Page 22

Tennis: Petr Korda, the Australian Open champion, has become the first player to fail a drugs test at Wimbledon.....Page 36
Football: The Premier League is fearful of the future should a court case on the televising of the sport go against it. The "doomsday" scenario for the League is that if it loses the case, ten elite clubs will break away and set up their own competition.....Page 36
Cricket: Pride is now the central issue for the England team after they suffered a humiliating loss against the Australian XI.....Pages 34, 36
Football: Rob Hughes continues his series on the 2006 World Cup by assessing the prospects of Germany staging the sport's biggest event.....Page 32

Yo ho ho: The D'Oyly Carte Company returns to its roots with a confidently traditional West End production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*.....Page 28
Lockerbie remembered: Westminster Cathedral was the setting for a sombre concert of music carefully chosen to offer solace to the families and friends of the victims of the bombing.....Page 28
After Heaven: The actor and stand-up comic Robin Williams discusses life after movies and his latest role as a bereaved father in *What Dreams May Come*.....Page 29
Barmy Bard: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is one of Shakespeare's trickiest plays, but a fine young RSC cast almost restores Benedict Nightingale's faith in it.....Page 29

Century's best: What is the greatest achievement, discovery or invention of the past century? Leading figures in the world of British science deliver their verdicts.....Page 12
Mr Benn's diaries: A political Pepys, Tony Benn, a diarist since he was nine, now totes a miniature video camera around Westminster and his Chesterfield constituency to record his life and times.....Page 13

Student digs: Landlords are often the butt of client criticism, but sometimes they are exploited — most of all by students.....Page 26
Service industry: A new breed of businessman is renting flats with all services provided.....Page 26

Interface is not published today. It returns next week with a special edition devoted to the future.



TOMORROW

IN THE TIMES

■ **FILMS**
Gene Hackman gives Will Smith that paranoid feeling in *Enemy of the State*, reviewed by Geoff Brown

■ **BOOKS**
Why Roy Foster can't quite go with Thomas Keneally's take on the emigrating Irish

After the House vote on President Clinton's impeachment, it's worth noting that the White House faces numerous investigations probing other serious scandals. One of them deals directly with national security. It focuses on the administration's utterly irresponsible actions that appear to have gone a long way toward satisfying China's seemingly insatiable appetite for US military technology.
The Washington Times

Preview: Family and colleagues remember Eric Morecambe. *Bring Me Sunshine* (BBC1, 9.30pm) **Review:** Joe Joseph on Britons and the boule.....Pages 34, 35

Public interest

Vanity Fair's Becky Sharp specialised in leading the high life on virtually no money. Hers is a model that Peter Mandelson, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, has followed.....Page 15

The aristocrat

The man who steered Edward VII and then George VI through this treacherous territory was Reginald Brett, the 2nd Viscount Esher.... He was the eyes, ears and mind of his Royal master.....Page 15

Party poopers

It is the season of parties and festivities, when corporate hospitality flows as freely as the indiscretions by middle management. What better time for personal and professional revenge.....Page 15

SIMON JENKINS

What I hope to fashion into a "virtual" English Museum — of the art of the parish church — is ready to be curated. One thousand churches accessible to the public have been visited.....Page 14

ROD LIDDELL

Nominations for the *Today* programme's "Person of the Millennium" closed this morning ... It is too late for anything terrible to happen. I wish I could adequately express my sense of relief.....Page 14

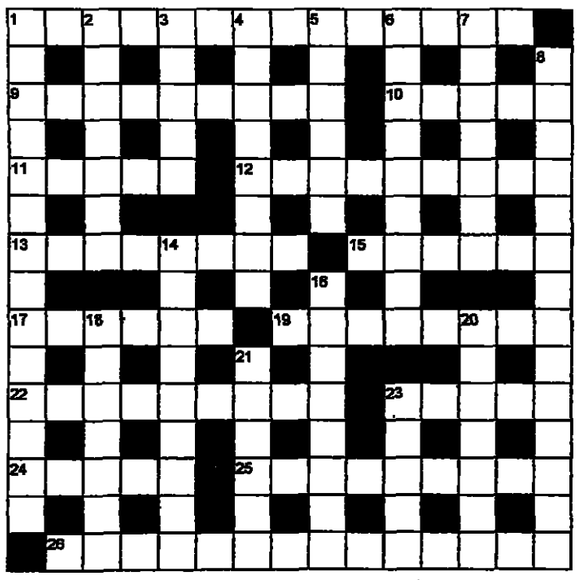
ALAN COREN

Since there is now no time to reply individually to the thousands of kind readers who have written to ask what they can buy me in return for my work on their behalf in 1998, may I use this column to present my Christmas list?.....Page 14

The Rev Lord Soper, Methodist minister; **Eprime Eshag**, economist; **Dorothy White**, campaigner for the elderly.....Page 17

Robinson's loan; bombing of Iraq; care in the community; church attendance at Christmas; conservation laws; curbing illegal immigration; requests for charity donations; angels' modesty.....Page 15

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,982



ACROSS
1 Subject to political power, people finally submit – that's putting it mildly (14).
9 Everyone is surrounding contrary gardener's plant (9).
10 Man in church producing peal (5).
11 In California, an artificial construction for boats (5).
12 Honey not nice and sweet (9).
13 Improper expression for "away from"? (8).
15 Responsibility of carrier of messages (6).
17 Diatribe delivered by one engaged in marketing (6).
19 Parting with vessel back in the autumn (8).
22 Letting air out, floated in disarray (9).
23 Walk stiffly, with member resisting pressure (5).
24 Conclusion derived from some games (5).
25 Material bringing about conversion of proselyte (9).
26 Applaud resoundingly (5,2,3,4).

DOWN
1 Original founder receives bill – that's not explained (11,3).
2 Manage to catch fish up in trawl (7).
3 Sail with two little boys (5).
4 Allow upwardly mobile English bookmaker a turn on ski slope (8).
5 Leaders of Trade Unions sometimes seem less enthusiastic for the struggle (6).
6 Fruit dessert I made once, disastrously (9).
7 Offensive rumour about honour (7).
8 Source of music one listens to (8,6).
14 Keen wife thought over annual holiday up North (4,5).
16 Forbidding obstacle that may be accepted as challenge (8).
18 Put new life into and uplifted drudge confined by that woman (7).
20 Unreliable fellow about to desert (7).
21 Allow the devil in – you'll never get rid of him (6).
23 Kid taken to court over offence, ultimately (5).

Times Two Crossword, page 36

Solution to Puzzle No 20,981

N	O	T	T	I	N	G	H	A	M	■	L	A	I	C
Y	E	■	N	I	■	R	■	M	■	N	■	U	■	■
A	L	L	U	V	I	A	■	S	L	E	I	G	H	T
S	■	L	■	E	■	C	■	E	■	I	■	L	■	T
A	F	T	E	R	N	O	O	N	■	S	E	E	D	Y
■	■	A	■	T	■	M	■	I	■	T	■	S	■	■
D	O	L	C	E	■	O	R	C	H	E	S	T	R	A
A	■	E	■	D	■	■	■	R	■	R	■	R	■	■
L	O	S	T	C	A	U	S	E	■	S	N	A	R	K
I	■	O	■	N	■	A	■	I	■	T	■	E	■	■
I	D	I	O	M	■	L	O	R	G	N	E	T	T	E
A	N	M	■	A	■	A	G	■	O	■	L	■	■	■
N	I	G	G	A	R	D	■	C	H	E	B	R	I	O
C	■	O	■	S	■	E	■	H	■	R	■	I	■	P
E	A	T	S	■	U	N	T	E	R	S	T	A	T	E

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HOURS OF DARKNESS

Sun rises: 8.05 am Sun sets: 3.55 pm
Moon sets: 8.56 pm Moon rises: 10.51 am
First quarter December 26
London 3.55 pm to 8.05 am
Bristol 4.06 pm to 8.15 am
Edinburgh 3.41 pm to 8.43 am
Manchester 3.52 pm to 8.24 am
Penzance 4.23 pm to 8.20 am

NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING
Recycled paper made up 41.4% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1997

WEATHER

☐ **General:** southern and eastern England will have spells of rain this morning, although it will slowly become drier and brighter from the west this afternoon. Remnants of overnight rain will clear Wales, western and northern England to leave a mix of bright spells and isolated showers. Eastern Scotland will be rather cold and breezy but it will be generally dry with sunny spells. Western Scotland and Northern Ireland will have a blustery mix of sunshine and showers, the showers turning increasingly wintry this afternoon.
Tonight, rain in southeast England will gradually clear leaving eastern parts mostly dry with clear spells. Showers in the west will die out in the early hours, but a band of rain will move into Northern Ireland and western Scotland, threatening the south-west and Wales as morning approaches.

☐ **London, SE England, E Anglia, Central S England, E Midlands, Channel Islands:** outbreaks of rain for much of day, but slowly clearing up in west. Fresh southwesterly wind. Max 7-9C (45-48F).

☐ **E England, Cent N and NE England:** staying largely dry with a few sunny spells, but cold. Moderate southwest wind. Max temp 4-6C (39-43F).

☐ **W Midlands, S W England, S Wales, N Wales, N W England, Lake District, Isle of Man:** any remaining overnight rain will soon clear to leave it cold with sunshine and a few showers. Moderate southwesterly wind. Max 4-6C (39-43F).

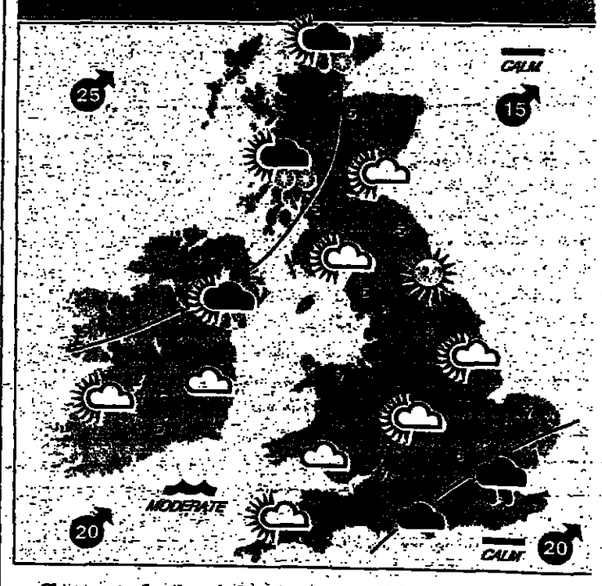
☐ **Borders, Edinburgh & Dundee, Aberdeen, Moray Firth, N E Scotland:** cold but bright with sunny spells and the odd isolated wintry shower. Freshening southwesterly wind. Max 2-4C (36-39F).

☐ **SW Scotland, Glasgow, Central Highlands, Argyll, NW Scotland, Orkney, Shetland:** cold and quite breezy with sunny spells and showers, the showers turning to sleet and snow. Fresh to strong southwesterly wind. Max 2-4C (36-39F).

☐ **Northern Ireland:** rather cold day with a blustery mix of sunshine and showers, the showers turning to sleet and even snow later. Fresh to strong southwesterly wind. Max 3-4C (37-39F).

☐ **Republic of Ireland:** breezy and bright, wind westerly, blustery at times. Max 7C (45F).

☐ **Outlook for tomorrow and Christmas Day:** Christmas Eve will start dry and bright but rather chilly. Wet and windy but somewhat milder weather will spread from the west during the day. England and Wales will be windy with some rain on Christmas Day but it will be very mild. Further north, windy with sunshine and showers.



Changes to the chart below from noon: low A will move to the southeast and fill; low B will track northeast slowly and fill; high C will build and drift slowly eastwards



24 hrs to 5 pm: b = bright; c = cloud; d = drizzle; ds = dust storm; du = dull; f = fair; fg = fog; g = gales; h = hail; r = rain; sh = shower; sl = sleet; s = sun; t = thunder

	Sun hrs	Rain in	Max C	Max F	
Aberdeen	1.0	-	5	41	c
Anglesey	1.2	0.01	9	48	r
Aspatria	0.1	0.03	8	46	sh
Aviemore	0.1	0.18	6	43	c
Belfast	0.1	0.01	9	48	r
Birmingham	1.0	0.06	3	37	fg
Bognor R	-	0.08	9	48	c
Bristol	2.9	0.01	8	45	fg
Buxton	3.5	0.08	4	39	fg
Cardiff	-	-	6	41	fg
Clacton	0.7	0.04	5	43	fg
Colwyn Bay	0.8	0.01	10	50	c
Crosnier	3.7	0.01	3	37	fg
Eskdalemuir	-	X	5	41	r
Exmouth	4.8	0.07	9	48	s
Fishguard	1.6	0.02	8	46	fg
Folkestone	2.0	0.11	8	46	b
Glasgow	0.1	0.04	9	48	r
Hastings	1.4	0.17	10	50	d
Hayling I.	-	0.14	9	48	du
Herne Bay	2.0	0.05	8	46	s
Hove	-	0.04	9	48	c
Hunstanton	X	-	7	388	fg
Isle of Man	0.2	0.06	10	50	sh
Isle of Wight	X	0.16	10	50	fg
Jersey	-	0.07	9	48	sh
Kinloss	0.2	0.01	7	45	b
Leeds	2.3	0.01	7	45	c
Lerwick	0.2	0.03	7	45	c
Leuchars	-	-	6	43	c
Littlehampton	-	0.07	9	48	r
London	-	0.06	9	48	r
Lowestoft	-	0.04	3	37	du
Manchester	0.9	0.01	4	39	du
Margate	1.4	0.07	8	46	c
Morecombe	0.1	0.02	8	46	du
Newcastle	0.7	-	6	43	c
Norwich	-	0.11	3	37	du
Oxford	-	0.04	3	37	du
Poole	-	0.07	6	43	r
Ross on Wye	0.1	0.02	3	37	du
Saunton Sands	4.1	0.06	10	50	s
Scarborough	-	0.01	3	37	du
Shrewsbury	-	0.01	1	34	du
Skegness	-	0.07	1	34	du
Southend	-	0.04	6	43	r
Southport	X	0.01	5	41	c
Stornoway	-	0.28	8	46	s
Swanage	-	0.10	7	45	s
Teignmouth	5.6	0.01	9	48	s
Tenby	2.3	0.03	11	52	sh
Thee	-	0.24	8	46	r
Torquay	6.4	0.06	11	52	s
Tynemouth	-	0.01	5	41	c
Weymouth	0.2	0.07	8	46	fg

Ajaccio	10	50	c	Cologne	2	36	c	Madrid	9	48	s	Rome	11	52	r
Akrotiri	18	64	s	Cyprus	1	34	c	Majorca	13	55	f	Salzburg	-1	30	f
Alexandria	18	64	s	Corfu	15	59	c	Malaga	17	63	s	S Frisco	3	37	s
Algiers	13	55	c	Dublin	5	41	r	Malta	14	57	c	Santiago	2	61	s
Amstrdm	4	39	s	Dubrovnik	11	52	r	Melbourne	19	66	c	S Paulo	X	X	
Athens	17	63	s	Faro	15	59	s	Mexico C	18	64	s	Seoul	10	50	s
Bahrain	25	77	s	Florence	7	45	r	Miami	27	81	s	Singapore	31	88	t
Bangkok	33	91	f	Frankfurt	3	37	f	Milan	8	46	r	Stockholm	-4	25	s
Barbados	29	84	f	Funchal	18	64	c	Montreal	-4	25	f	Strasbrg	2	36	c
Barcelona	13	55	s	Geneva	3	37	c	Moscow	1	34	sn	Sydney	21	70	r
Beirut	16	61	f	Gibraltar	17	63	s	Munich	0	32	r	Tangier	16	61	r
Belgrade	0	32	r	Helsinki	-10	14	s	Nairobi	X	X		Tel Aviv	19	66	s
Berlin	0	32	r	Hong K	26	79	s	Naples	9	48	r	Tenerife	21	70	f
Bermuda	23	73	r	Innsbruck	1	34	c	N Delhi	17	63	fg	Tokyo	10	50	s
Biarritz	7	45	s	Istanbul	12	54	s	N York	-11	52	r	Toronto	-4	25	s
Bordeaux	5	41	r	Jeddah	29	84	s	Nice	13	55	s	Tunis	13	55	c
Brussels	3	37	s	Jo'burg	25	77	r	Oslo	-2	28	r	Valencia	13	55	s
Budapest	0	32	sn	L Palmas	20	68	r	Paris	4	39	s	Vancver	-6	23	r
B Aires	20	68	r	Le Touet	3	37	r	Perth	33	91	s	Venice	X	X	
Beijing	11	52	s	Lisbon	11	52	s	Prague	1	34	r	Vienna	2	36	r
Cairo	19	66	s	Locarno	10	50	s	Reykjavik	4	39	r	Warsaw	0	32	c
Cape Tn	X	X		L Angeles	10	50	s	Rhodes	15	59	r	Washton	11	52	c
Chicago	-4	25	r	Luxembg	2	36	r	Rio de J	27	81	r	Wellington	21	70	X
Christchurch	X	X		Luxor	20	68	s	Riyadh	29	84	s	Zurich	2	36	s

Temperatures at midday local time on Monday. X = not available

TODAY	AM	HT	PM	HT	TODAY	AM	HT	PM	HT
Aberdeen	3:54	4.0	15:58	4.1	Liverpool	1:27	8.8	13:48	9.0
Avonmouth	9:42	12.5	22:01	12.2	London Bridge	4:13	7.0	16:40	7.0
Belfast	1:21	3.3	13:34	3.5	Lowestoft	-	-	12:12	2.3
Cardiff	8:28	11.6	21:47	11.3	Margate	2:17	4.7	14:43	4.8
Devonport	3:09	5.3	20:27	5.0	Milford Haven	8:43	6.5	21:03	6.2
Dover	1:15	6.4	13:30	6.2	Newquay	7:36	6.6	19:57	6.3
Dublin	2:03	3.7	14:15	3.9	Oban	5:09	3.9	20:19	3.6
Falmouth	7:40	5.1	19:59	4.8	Penzance	7:06	5.3	19:24	5.0
Greenock	2:53	3.2	15:11	3.5	Portland	0:24	2.0	21:34	1.8
Harwich	2:03	3.8	14:30	3.8	Portsmouth	1:46	4.5	13:53	4.5
Holyhead	0:39	5.7	12:56	5.4	Shoreham	1:31	5.9	13:41	5.9
Hull (Albert Dk)	8:32	8.1	21:01	8.3	Southampton	1:03	4.4	13:18	4.4
Ilfracombe	2:28	8.7	20:43	8.4	Swansea	8:47	8.8	21:07	8.5
King's Lynn	8:54	6.1	21:03	6.4	Tees	6:16	5.1	18:25	5.2
Leith	5:12	5.2	17:24	5.2	Watton-On-Naze	1:53	4.0	14:23	4.0

All times GMT. Heights in metres

Yesterday: Highest day temp: St Mary's, Scilly Isles, 12C (54F); lowest day max: Shobdon, Hereford and Worcester, 1C (34F); highest rainfall: Lusa, Isle Of Skye, 0.43ins; highest sunshine: Torquay, Devon, 6.4hrs.

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THE TIMES

2

INSIDE SECTION 2 TODAY



BUSINESS
The toy collectors reckon is too good for children
PAGE 23



HOMES
Pity the poor landlord who lets to students
PAGE 26



ARTS
Vintage G&S in the company of D'Oyly Carte
PAGES 28, 29

TELEVISION AND RADIO
Pages 34, 35

BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft — WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 23 1998

Green ready to call EGM to win Sears

PHILIP GREEN will next month make a final attempt to win Sears by calling an extraordinary meeting aimed at ousting Sir Bob Reid from the helm of the retail group.

Mr Green, who had previously indicated he would make an offer of more than 300p a share for Sears, said yesterday that his higher offer of 340p a share has been rejected by Sir Bob without discussion.

He will now wait until the company's January trading statement, then try to requisition an EGM, which could remove Sir Bob and facilitate his £520 million cash bid.

This would be a 30 per cent premium to Sears's current share price, which rose 1p to 262p yesterday amid City doubt that a bid will eventually materialise.

Mr Green is understood to be claiming support of shareholders who hold a 30 per cent stake in the company, including Phillips & Drew, which has a 14 per cent stake.

He needs the support of shareholders with a 10 per cent stake to call an extraordinary meeting, and 50.1 per cent to win a vote of no confidence.

Sears denied it had rejected Mr Green's bid approach, and accused him of touting theoretical prices without making a hard offer. It said: "Mr Green or anyone else is welcome to put a firm offer on the table — this is a public company."

Mr Green said: "They have not even had a meeting with me. That is why I had to make the statement."

His statement said Sears had refused to provide five pieces of basic trading information, which were essential to mount a firm bid.

One analyst said: "Everyone knows he won't go hostile, because he wants to avoid the fees and a 60-day battle. He is a serious bidder, but he's trying to talk his way into this."

Another said: "Sears's shares would take years to reach 340p. Sir Bob and his merry men have failed and they should be made to walk the plank."

Mr Green's bid is backed by Tom Hunter, who made £250 million in cash when he sold Sports Division — a former Sears subsidiary — to JJB Sports in July. Mr Green made £37.7 million from the deal.

The deal is being arranged by William Tebbit, a stockbroker from Reas Brothers whose father Lord Tebbit is a non-executive director of Sears.

Commentary, page 21

GEC splits businesses to prepare for merger

BY CHRISTINE BUCKLEY
INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

GEC yesterday prepared the ground for a major merger, likely to be with British Aerospace, by announcing a separation of its industrial and defence businesses.

The company is to split its defence and civil operations ahead of a merger in a move to make GEC Marconi, the division that embraces all defence activities, better suited to a partnership. The other half of GEC will house telecoms and the rest of the company's industrial businesses such as medical and retail systems.

GEC's options to split its businesses include a demerger and flotation in which existing shareholders would get new shares in a separate GEC II company. It could also go for a trade sale of one half. Theoretically it could maintain ownership over the two halves but run them entirely separately although this course is thought highly unlikely.

GEC was forced to make public its plans to split the company because of persistent speculation about an imminent merger, prompting requests from the Stock Exchange for information. In a statement to the stock market, GEC said it was still in discussions with a number of companies. It said: "To pursue these discussions and exploit the growth potential of its civil businesses, it has decided to separate its civil businesses from its aerospace and defence activities." GEC would not say how the split will be enforced. That will be decided when it seals its merger plans, depending on what its partner wants. A spokesman said the decision will be made in the new year.

GEC Marconi is worth about £4 billion, according to analysts. But its resale value could touch £5.5 billion, according to Zafar Khan, aerospace analyst at SGST. It is thought that BAe will find GEC Marconi far more palatable as a merger partner than the full package of GEC's interests which, despite restructuring by Lord Simpson of Dunkeld, chief executive, are still diverse.

Nick Cunningham, aerospace analyst at Salomon Smith Barney, said: "This is good news because BAe would not be subsumed in a bigger group . . . It certainly appears to be setting things up for a 50:50 merger."

GEC's move to dress itself for a merger fuelled worries at Daimler-Chrysler Aerospace (Dasa), the German company with which BAe had originally planned to merge before GEC's intervention. Dasa said the priority should be "to horizontal European restructuring instead of national vertical integration". The German company is believed to be willing to forge a trilateral link that included GEC Marconi at a later stage. But it first wants a direct link with BAe so that it can influence the industrial decision making of the new company.

Dasa wants BAe to stick to the original plans, which would have seen BAe with a 60 per cent stake and Dasa a 40 per cent interest. The German Government is anxious that a merger involving Dasa, which represents virtually all of the country's defence operation, should be a marriage of equals. If BAe came to the party with GEC Marconi, Dasa's role would be substantially reduced. If its stake is too small the Germans could walk away from the deal, scuppering the important cross-border merger.

BAe would not comment on GEC's split or its own next move yesterday. A merger between GEC and BAe could produce annual cost savings of £300 million. More savings could be delivered by links with Dasa.

Familiar fate, page 20
Commentary, page 21

THE WEINSTOCK LEGACY



Weinstock: shaped GEC

SPLITTING GEC's defence and civil businesses is yet another step in Lord Simpson of Dunkeld's transformation of the once sprawling defence and industrial combine (Christine Buckley writes). The company is now many miles from the one created by Lord Weinstock in his somewhat idiosyncratic style.

Lord Weinstock's shaping of GEC over his 33 years at the helm bequeathed a network of joint ventures, stakeholdings and investments in a diverse range of industrial activities. Two years ago Lord Simpson arrived at GEC from the former Lucas after a career that started at British Leyland and included — somewhat fittingly given the expected merger — British Aerospace. Lord Simpson rejected the joint-venture culture and set about creating a more focused organisation.

His first big move came last year when he split the group into five divisions to handle day-to-day operations and investment. This overturned Lord Weinstock's archaic practice of having GEC's hundreds of subsidiaries file monthly figures directly to him.

Lord Simpson's strike at the joint-venture culture came this year when GEC took full control of GPT, the telecoms business, and when Alstom, the electrical engineering company which had been owned with France's Alcatel, was floated.

The new-look GEC was further advanced when it bought Tracor, the US defence electronics business, for £800 million.

ECB set to retain interest rate of 3% for euro

BY JANET BUSH
ECONOMICS EDITOR

THE European Central Bank wants to maintain the euro interest rate at 3 per cent "for the forseeable future", its president said yesterday.

Speaking after the final ECB council meeting before the launch of the single currency on January 1, Wim Duisenberg, ECB president, said he saw no reason to suggest the euro rate would have to be altered in the short term. The rate of 3 per cent was effectively set on December 3 when ten out of the 11 national central banks forming the euro staged a co-ordinated cut.

Yesterday the ECB set a corridor for euro money market rates, setting its deposit rate at 2 per cent and its marginal lending rate at 4.5 per cent. These two rates represent the effective upper and lower limits for euro money market rates.

The ECB said that, as a temporary measure between January 4 and 21, it was setting the rate on its deposit facility at 2.75 per cent and on its marginal lending facility at 3.25 per cent.

The decision to set a very narrow interest rate corridor during the first few weeks of the euro's life was widely welcomed as a protection against speculation.

The International Monetary Fund has granted the ECB observer status, enabling an ECB representative to attend IMF board meetings that discuss issues of relevance to the new institution.

An ECB official would attend IMF board meetings when these discussed global and market developments including monetary and exchange rate policies in the euro zone, the policies of euro members, the euro's global role, the IMF's regular World Economic Outlook and its capital markets reports as well as any meetings of mutual interest."

Absorbing shocks, page 23

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES

FTSE 100	5843.3	(-33.2)
Yield	2.78%	
FTSE All Share	2649.57	(-9.92)
Nikkei	13779.45	(-373.50)
New York:		
Dow Jones	9006.36(+17.51)*	
S&P Composite	1202.21	(-0.63)*

US RATE

Federal Funds	4¾%*	(4¾%)
Long bond	102⅝*	(102⅝)
Yield	5.11%*	(5.06%)

LONDON MONEY

3-mth interbank	6⅝%	(6⅝%)
Life long gilt future (Mar)	117.90	(118.26)

STERLING

New York:		
$	1.6777*	(1.6835)
London:		
$	1.6780	(1.6810)
DM	2.8111	(2.8126)
FFr	9.4296	(9.4339)
SFr	2.2924	(2.2882)
Yen	196.23	(195.14)
£ index	101.1	(101.2)

DOLLAR

London:		
DM	1.6740*	(1.6715)
FFr	5.6140*	(5.6055)
SFr	1.3857*	(1.3595)
Yen	1.3657*	(116.07)
$ index	105.4	(105.0)

Tokyo close Yen 117.05

NORTH SEA OIL

Brent (5-day(Mar)	$10.10	($9.90)

GOLD

London close	$287.25	($288.95)

* denotes midday trading prices

Fed keeps US rates on hold

THE Federal Reserve yesterday kept US interest rates on hold in the wake of evidence of strong retail spending in America (Oliver August writes from New York).

The Fed's Open Market Committee met for a regular meeting and decided to maintain the overnight lending rate at 4.75 per cent after three rate cuts during the past three months.

John Williams, the chief economist at Bankers Trust, said: "I think the Fed is on hold for the foreseeable future."

Morgan Grenfell pips rivals for Coral



First past the post: Morgan Grenfell Private Equity, an investment arm of Deutsche Bank, has won the race for Coral, the betting shop operator, with a £390 million bid. Morgan Grenfell, who thwarted challenges from Cinven and the Tote, pledged to invest heavily to refurbish the chain of 827 outlets. Page 21

Harvard moneymen join the real world

FROM OLIVER AUGUST IN NEW YORK

THE fund managers whose performance has outshone most of Wall Street and made Harvard the best-funded academic institution in the world, have quit the university soon after picking up 55 per cent pay rises and salary cheques running into millions of dollars.

An extraordinary investment performance by Harvard's team of money managers has meant the university has been able to rely on billions of dollars in extra funding from the stock market.

The Harvard stock portfolio has shown annual increases of 42 per cent during the past three years in which the stock market rose 30 per cent annually. In fixed income, Harvard's gains were more than double the average bond market gain. This year the fund has swollen to more than $13 billion, putting Harvard in the same league as the Soros group of funds, worth about $18 billion.

The success has meant that the fund management team have also outstripped most top Wall Street executives' in remuneration as well. Jonathan Jacobson, the head manager, last year received $10 million and four other university employees were paid more than $6 million. Their rises this year — linked to the performance of funds — came after their pay was almost tripled the previous year.

According to Michael Castine, a New York headhunter: "Their compensation ranks in the top 5 to 10 per cent of money managers. To the average person the pay is totally out of whack. But it's the way it should work if you perform and your compensation is based on how well you do."

But the abilities of what must be the best paid people in the academic world will now be available to a wider audience. Mr Jacobson has led an exodus of some of his managers from the campus in New England to set up their own fund.

Wall's accused of freezing out rivals

BY FRASER NELSON

WALL'S is being investigated by the Office of Fair Trading amid fresh claims that it is abusing its market position by refusing to allow rival brands to be sold in the freezers it supplies to shops.

The inquiry seeks to find out why Mars has been unable to command more than 9 per cent of the market through ice cream versions of its Mars Bar, Snickers and other chocolate bars.

Wall's, which has 70 per cent of the "impulse" market through the likes of Magnum and Cornetto, said that it is amazed to be investigated only three weeks after the Monopolies and Mergers Commission finished its last submission. It was then found guilty of supplying retailers on a preferential basis — and promised changes on all count.

Iain Ferguson, chairman of Birds Eye Wall's, said: "Wall's has achieved its position through innovation and fair competition. We see little point in an inquiry at this time, making this the third occasion that the industry has been investigated in six years."

The OFT said: "We last looked at Wall's in 1994 when it seemed that Mars were growing quickly and the market would change considerably. This hasn't happened, so we are looking again."

Mars said: "It is unfair that Wall's does not allow any other ice cream to be sold in their freezers. When we supply the freezers, we allow all kinds of brands to be stored there because we sell more."

The 1994 investigation focused only on the issue of freezer exclusivity.

This time, the OFT will look at the entire industry in the hope of settling the matter once and for all.

Nestlé, Treats and Häagen-Dazs, owned by Diageo, are the only other main players in the market.

The European Commission is conducting a similar inquiry in the Republic of Ireland.

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Familiar fate follows Weinstock departure

By Martin Waller and Manus Costello

LIKE the empires of Alexander and Attila, the creations of some of our most successful businessmen did not long survive their departure. Lord Weinstock is not the last such entrepreneur to see his work torn apart by his successors.

Lord Weinstock did not strictly speaking create GEC; his company, Radio and Allied Industries, was taken over by the ailing GEC in the 1960s. But Plessey, a decade ago, was the last significant deal, and he spent much of the 1990s sitting on his growing cash pile fielding City criticism for what was seen as his excessive caution.

Like GEC, the empires of Tiny Rowland, Sir Owen Green and Lord Hanson were largely the product of their own skills and drive. Lonrho, BTR and Hanson still exist in name but in much shrunken form. All three went through serious decline before corrective action was taken.

Tiny Rowland died earlier this year. But he was forced out of Lonrho, which he created out of his African trading interests to include activities as diverse as hotels and *The Observer* newspaper, only to see it reduced to its constituent parts.

Sir Owen quit as BTR chairman in 1993, when the group had a market value of £12 billion. As the share price plunged, successive managers embarked on disposals worth more than £5 billion and announced plans to hand out several billion more to shareholders. The current market worth is £4 billion.

Lord Hanson is the exception in that he broke up the empire he and Sir Gordon White founded as a small greetings card business rather than watching the process unhappily from the wings. But the demerger of Hanson was likewise spurred on by a period of stock market underperformance and pressure from institutions to do something.

Stephen Francis is vice-president with responsiblity for strategy practice at AT Kearney, the management consultant. He lays much of the blame for the poor performance and eventual dismembering of such one-man creations on City inertia. "The one man usually has one idea — when that idea dies, the market takes a while to work it out. Then you find that institutional investors aren't too aggressive about facing the fact."

He says the first sign that the one idea has run out of steam is the share price, as fund managers prefer to sell the shares rather than agitate for effective change.

Lonrho, GEC and to a lesser extent Hanson also had a problem of succession. Some mechanism to ensure a handover to stable management is vital. As Peter Lynch, the US fund manager, said: "I like buying companies that can be run by monkeys — because one day they will be."

US banks dominate finance awards

By Richard Miles
Banking Correspondent

US investment banks have again dominated the annual capital markets awards, with Morgan Stanley Dean Witter taking three of the top six accolades.

Morgan Stanley was named bank of the year, as well as picking up the prize for best equities house and best bond house in the tenth annual investment banking awards given by *International Financing Review*.

Deutsche Bank was the only European company to feature in the big six, taking the laurels for derivatives house of the year. Fannie Mae was named foremost borrower, while Chase Manhattan took the title of premier loan house.

IFR said Morgan Stanley merited the top award because of its consistent ability in 1998 "to execute large volumes of high quality transactions in the face of unprecedented market instability".

Keith Mullin, editor of *IFR*, said the year had been one of the most testing for the international capital markets "and only a few issuers and investors have come through unscathed". US financial houses dominated because of their global presence and experience.

Ironically, one of Morgan Stanley's most conspicuous UK deals, a $2 billion bond issue for Formula One, has run into difficulties.



Gerry Robinson, left and Charles Allen, chief executive of Granada, which is disappointed at the value set on ITV franchises

Granada to challenge ITC over forecasts

By Raymond Snoddy
Media Editor

GRANADA is expected to challenge the financial forecasts of the Independent Television Commission before applying for new licences for London Weekend Television and Granada Television.

Granada, in line with a number of other ITV companies, is disappointed at the values set on ITV franchises by the ITC last month, arguing that the forecasts for advertising growth are too optimistic.

The company, chaired by Gerry Robinson, believes that one of commission's key figures — a forecast that terrestrial advertising will grow by a real annual average of 3 per cent — is too high, given the possibility of an economic slowdown and increasing competition in the television market.

The owners of 11 of the 15 ITV licences applied for new ten-year licences earlier this year. In November the Commission set out the estimated total "tender" payments for the 11 licences. This year the payments are expected to total £363 million.

Under the revaluation, the ITC estimates that the total paid next year would be £292 million.

Granada decided not to apply this time for either its North West or its LWT licence and will wait for another two years and hopes to challenge the commission figures in the meantime.

Commentary, page 21

Post Office profits drop despite rise in revenue

By Manus Costello

THE Post Office Group yesterday announced a drop in half-year profits and said that "relentless" competitive pressures made the implementation of greater commercial freedoms essential.

Despite increasing revenues to £3.3 billion (£3.2 billion) in the six months to September 27, pre-tax profits were £283 million, down from £329 million last time. The fall in profit was due largely to the self-imposed freeze on postage prices, set to continue until next April, combined with increasingly competitive trading conditions.

The Parcelforce Worldwide division was badly hit, incurring a loss of £17 million, the same as last year, which was blamed on its lack of "monopoly protection" and exposure to a "highly competitive environment". The Royal Mail saw profits fall from £303 million to £218 million, having been badly affected by higher operating costs and by the price freeze, which has been in place since July 1996.

The Post Office Counters division, however, lifted profits to £25 million (£7 million), although this was said to reflect uneven capital investment rather than an upward trend.

A Post Office spokesman said: "Over the past 20 years, the Post Office's profit has gone to the Treasury. There is an urgent need now for the Post Office to invest more money to allow us to catch up on past under-investment in our infrastructure, as well as to make acquisitions and joint ventures so that we can compete head-on with our rivals".

Earlier this month, Peter Mandelson, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, announced that the Post Office's contributions to the Treasury would be reduced. This financial year, the Post Office will have to contribute £310 million to the Treasury; this will be cut to £207 million next year.

Mr Mandelson's proposals included removing the Post Office's monopoly on letters costing less than £1, but failed to recommend the partial privatisation that many in the organisation had been seeking.

The Post Office said that yesterday's results proved the need for urgency on the issue. "The competitive pressure on all of the Post Office's business is relentless so it is essential that the welcome commercial freedoms announced by the Government last week are implemented as soon as possible," the spokesman said. The Government is due to publish a White Paper on the proposals in the new year.

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Fitch puts South Korea on review

SOUTH KOREA'S economic rehabilitation took a great leap forward yesterday when its currency rating was put on review with positive implications by Fitch IBCA, the leading European credit rating agency. Fitch said that South Korea had experienced a "remarkable turnaround in useable international reserves, the likes of which remain unprecedented in modern rating history". Fitch added that the risk of a debt default triggered by a lack of foreign exchange had substantially diminished.

Fitch said that big corporate sector debts and a poorly supervised financial sector were continuing problems that could take two to three years to work out. "Nonetheless, there are tentative signs that the economy is turning around, while the Government is showing considerable determination in tackling financial and corporate sector reform," it said. The optimism expressed by Fitch echoed that of the International Monetary Fund in its economic outlook published on Monday. The IMF said that South Korea, Thailand and Malaysia all faced brighter prospects next year. In the first two of these economies, the IMF noted that "financial markets have already recovered significantly".

Gill to leave Delta

DELTA, the industrial and electrical group, yesterday announced that Mike Gill, finance director, would be leaving the company on March 26, 1999. He joined Delta in 1985 and has been finance director since 1988. He will be succeeded by Mark Robson, 40, who is joining from ICI, where he is finance director of its Performance Chemicals business. The company said it had appointed Mr Robson because it was looking for someone who was more internationally focused, in keeping with the new direction of the group.

Avon denies bid talks

SHARES of Avon Rubber rose 16½p to 554p in spite of the company's denial that it was currently in bid talks. Avon, which manufactures rubber dinghies and safety products, said it received an unsolicited and conditional offer proposal last week that the board rejected as inadequate. The statement was issued in response to a sharp rise in the company's shares from a five-year low of 394p in November. At yesterday's price the company is valued at £154 million.

Arena Leisure gains

ARENA LEISURE, the quoted racecourse owner, reported pre-tax profits for the six months to September 30 at £302,000, up from £165,000 last time. The company said it has not experienced any noticeable slackening in trading. Turnover, at £4.17 million, was up 82 per cent after the £3.25 million acquisition of Folkestone Racecourse in April. Earnings per share were 0.16p (0.15p). There is no interim dividend and the company said it does not intend to declare a final dividend.

Spuddles ultimatum

PARK GROUP, the troubled food hampers and financial services company, has given potential buyers one month to make an offer for its Spuddles flavoured potato manufacturing operation on Merseyside. Park says operations at the site will be discontinued over the next month and if a deal is not concluded the facility will be closed on January 22. Park Group, whose shares have halved to 35p since May, is restructuring to focus on financial and marketing services.

Delancey acquisition

DELANCEY ESTATES, the property company in which George Soros invested £100 million earlier this year, yesterday announced that its subsidiary, Delancey Chesterfield, has acquired a 252-year lease on land in Chesterfield and that it will fund the site's £36.4 million development into a shopping centre. The development will create 220,000 square feet of retail space with a target rent of £2.94 million, representing a net yield of 7.75 per cent. The acquisition will be funded from existing cash resources.

EU agrees to coal aid

THE European Commission has given the German authorities the green light for a DM9.2 billion (£3.3 billion) restructuring programme for the country's coal industry after an examination of the EU's state aid rules for the sector. The aid includes DM5.141 billion of operating aid, DM3.229 billion to fund restructuring and DM73 million for the underground labour force. The EU said its main aim in clearing the aid was to alleviate the problems in areas suffering from above-average unemployment.

Celebrated losses rise

CELEBRATED GROUP, the theme restaurant company that trades under the Chili's Grill & Bar and Starvin' Marvin's banners, blamed restructuring costs for an increase in first-half losses. However, it insisted that the "serious erosion" of its business has now been stemmed. The group reported a pre-tax loss of £665,000 for the six months to September 27 compared with a loss of £215,000 for the same period last year. Turnover fell from £3.96 million to £3.80 million. Losses were 1.08p a share (0.44p). There is again no dividend.

Alstom in Brazil deal

ALSTOM, the Franco-British engineering group, has won a turnkey contract worth $87 million (£52 million) for a metro system in the city of Fortaleza, northeast Brazil. Due for completion in 2001, the 24-kilometre line will have 17 stations, of which three will be underground. The order covers ten four-car trains and the signalling system. Alstom will also be responsible for the management of the project and the installation of the electrical and mechanical system. The total value of the project is $300 million.

Russian mob link to Crumax failure

By Carl Mortished, Industrial Business Editor

RUSSIA'S most powerful gangster has been linked to the collapse of Crumax Magnetics, a magnet factory in Southport, threatening more than 100 jobs.

Ernst & Young has been appointed administrator at Crumax after the appointment of a receiver by a court in Alberta, Canada to YBM, the parent of Crumax.

YBM has denied it is linked to any wrong doing, but its collapse has exposed a connection to Semion Mogilevich, the so-called "Brainy Don", who is reputed to be involved in money-laundering, arms dealing, prostitution, drugs and gun-running. Mogilevich was a shareholder in YBM, which secured a Toronto listing in 1996. He was barred from Britain in 1995 after investigations into alleged money-laundering.

YBM bought the Southport magnets business in February from Philips, the Dutch electronics company. Only three months later, the Pennsylvania head office of YBM was raided by a 60-strong team of agents from the FBI, Internal Revenue, US immigration and Customs services. Trading in YBM shares was halted. The company is now expected to be indicted by a grand jury for money-laundering.

News Corp close to deal with Italians

THE News Corporation, the international media group, is close to a television deal with Telecom Italia, which is likely to see a joint venture between the two put in a massive bid for the pay-TV rights to Italian football (Raymond Snoddy writes).

After weeks of negotiations with the Italian telecommunications group the deal envisaged will see News Corp, the parent company of *The Times*, taking a 70 per cent stake in an enlarged subsidiary of Telecom Italia called Stream.

Under the plan Telecom Italia would take a stake of nearly 20 per cent and TF1, the French TV channel, 10 to 15 per cent. Stream would be used as a vehicle for expansion into pay-TV.

Stroud & Swindon agrees home income settlement

By Gavin Lumsden

STROUD & SWINDON Building Society has reached an out-of-court settlement with the Investors' Compensation Scheme (ICS) over its part in the home income plan (HIP) scandal of the 1980s which left thousands of poor pensioners with mountainous debts.

Although Stroud & Swindon has not admitted liability towards borrowers who took out 71 "capital release plans" funded by the society in the late 1980s, it has agreed to contribute towards their compensation and to offer a schedule of terms that will include a cash payment.

The agreement with the ICS follows a defeat in the High Court last Friday for West Bromwich Building Society (WBBS), a main lender of HIPs, which fought to deny its responsibility for 200 investors who endured hardship after buying plans it funded.

Home income plans allowed pensioners to release equity in their homes that could be invested in stocks and shares to provide an income. However, they were deeply flawed. In the property and stock market crash of 1989 they failed, leaving some 3,000 elderly investors fighting repossession by the lenders.

The ICS is seeking to recoup the £52 million it has so far paid out in compensation to investors from those involved in the scandal. It has already settled with the Cheltenham & Gloucester, WBBS and the Solicitors' Indemnity Fund, and is in negotiations with other lenders including the Halifax, Northern Rock and Bristol & West.

Currencies

	Bank Buys	Bank Sells
Australia $	2.82	2.64
Austria Sch	20.83	19.15
Belgium Fr	61.28	56.32
Canada $	2.719	2.531
Cyprus Cyp £	0.8771	0.8056
Denmark kr	11.30	10.41
Egypt	5.91	5.37
Finland Mrk	9.11	8.36
France Fr	9.91	9.13
Germany Dm	2.979	2.737
Greece Dr	458	439
Hong Kong $	13.81	12.81
Iceland	129	109
Indonesia	16675	11575
Ireland Pt	1.1883	1.0993
Israel Shk	7.35	6.69
Italy Lira	2963	2728
Japan Yen	211.83	196.30
Malta	0.667	0.608
Netherlds Gld	3.304	3.069
New Zealand $	3.38	3.12
Norway Kr	13.49	12.55
Portugal Esc	361.18	278.15
S Africa Rd	10.86	9.60
Spain Pes	250.83	232.04
Sweden Kr	14.28	13.19
Switzerland Fr	2.448	2.230
Turkey Lira	537607	501874
USA $	1.783	1.640

Rates for small denomination banknotes only as supplied by Barclays Bank. Different rates apply to traveller's cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

Simpson hoists the white flag

COMMENTARY
by our City Editor

Back in the days when Lord Weinstock was putting together GEC, the policy of the then Labour Government was to create "national champions". These organisations — which in the Wilson era tended to have some state input and were run by people who were friendly with Tony Benn — would place Britain at the forefront in areas such as carmaking, automation and aerospace. Alas, all they succeeded in giving us was British Leyland, Concorde and Sir Alastair Morton.

Yet the policy lingered on through successive governments, gaining a new lease of life under Michael Heseltine, who used to boast he would "intervene before breakfast, lunch and dinner" to promote British industry. The current Trade Secretary seems more interested in sorting out his home loan arrangements than creating national champions, so it is left to the businesses to do it themselves.

In defence, British Aerospace decided some time ago that it had to put itself at the centre of the restructuring that was bound to take place in Europe. It has revealed talks with DaimlerChrysler Aerospace (Dasa) as part of a strategy known unofficially as "stuff the French". But yesterday's announcement from GEC might persuade Sir Richard Evans that there is greater game to be had nearer home.

GEC has been only peripherally involved in this European restructuring thingy. Lord Simpson appears distrustful of the French, wary of the Germans and not keen to jump into bed with the Italians. In the past few months GEC has been trying to buy businesses in the US, without much luck. On the sidelines in one battle, and stymied in another, Simpson has decided to turn GEC from hunter into prey.

In this he is aided by John Mayo, one of the world's great unbundlers, who was responsible for demerging Zeneca from ICI. Mayo wants to split the defence side of GEC from the civil side, so creating two businesses that he hopes will be worth more than the original parent. He will probably succeed in this, but largely because one or both of the two orphans will be taken over by someone larger.

The chances of this happening are much larger on the defence side than on the civil, where GPT is probably big enough to have a say on the future of telecoms systems. In defence, much depends on whether BAe decides that it wants to take over GEC to create a national champion and whether the UK Government is willing to back this sort of restructuring in a way the French Government has with its own defence industry. GEC is no longer in a position to force the pace here. As at Lucas, Simpson has given up on the tricky task of sorting out the company himself and is looking for a deal to create the shareholder value that he cannot create organically. The job of creating a national champion in the defence industry thus falls to Sir Richard Evans, and there is no love lost between him and Lord Simpson.

Arnault ready to loosen Diageo ties

Little has been heard of Bernard Arnault since the swashbuckling Frenchman forced the combined might of Guinness and Grand Metropolitan to stump up £250 million in return for him agreeing to their £24 billion merger. That was more than a year ago, since when he has been trying to steer LVMH, his luxury goods group, through the turbulence of Asia, which accounts for about 40 per cent of his profits. But Arnault is not the sort of person to let a little local difficulty keep him in check, and he recently announced that he in talks to acquire Yves Saint Laurent for about £500 million.

Ever since the YSL deal was mooted, there have been persistent suggestions that Arnault might need to sell some of LVMH's 11 per cent stake in Diageo. Although he has moved quickly to deny that he has any immediate plans to do so, arguing that he could finance the YSL deal with bank debt, the feeling over the Channel is that he is set to loosen his Anglophile ties.

It is not as if the Frenchman has ever been the greatest fan of the strategy being pursued by John McGrath, the Diageo chief executive. During last year's aggressive five-month campaign to derail the merger, he roundly condemned the concept of a food and drink behemoth combining spirits, brewing, food and burgers. His own view was that the drinks interests of Guinness and GrandMet should be spun off into a separately quoted company with LVMH's Moët Hennessy arm. The £250 million sweetener — and the initial post-merger rise in the Diageo share-price — may have allayed his fears temporarily, but his antipathy to a Diageo that, in his view, lacks focus is unchanged.

Since then, Diageo's shares have been dogged by the global economic malaise and it will be some time before the bigger-is-better argument at the heart of the merger can be proved in hard figures. When the share price hit 480p in September, compared with the 630p Arnault paid for a big chunk of it, there was little that he could do but to sit tight and hope for a recovery.

When he agreed to rubber-stamp the merger, he neatly sidestepped questions over his future commitment by stating: "I am not in the business of creating conflict. I am in the business of creating wealth. You have to be pragmatic." There is a growing view that now — with the shares almost back up to 700p — his pragmatism is telling him to sell at least some of his stake and pocket a rather tidy £2.7 billion.

How Green is my Sears bid?

So Philip Green has finally come out of the woodwork and said he is ready to bid £520 million for Sears. The failure of the share price to respond to this news, leaving it a whole 78p below Green's prospective offer, indicates that the City does not take him seriously. That's as maybe. Green may not be the City's favourite corporate raider — one fund manager accused him of playing games yesterday — but by putting his cards on the table and threatening to call an extraordinary shareholders' meeting, Green has succeeded in putting Sears into play.

To misquote Sir Winston Churchill, this is not the end of the beginning but the beginning of the end. If Philip Green, who has made a fortune out of buying businesses from Sears and proving that the company could not find value with a Geiger counter, thinks the retailer is worth £520 million, then it is probably worth £600 million. The stock market currently values it at two thirds of that.

Sir Bob Reid, whose credibility is being diminished by every turn of this sorry saga, now has a simple choice. Does he continue with his ostrich strategy, hoping that the potential bidders will tire off pursuing his wounded group? Or does he bow to the inevitable and start entering negotiations with people will to value Sears at more than its current share price? The antipathy he feels towards Philip Green should not obscure his view of what is in shareholders' best interests.

Gerry's challenge

GERRY ROBINSON is unhappy. He thinks the forecasts used by the Independent Television Commission to calculate how much ITV companies should pay for their new licences are bunk. They are based on estimates that advertising revenue will grow at 3 per cent per annum in real terms, which looks reasonable given how well ITV has done in the past. But as Sir Robin Biggam, chairman of the ITC and former boss of the underperforming BICC, should know all too well, there's a recession out there.



Jim Kerr, lead singer with Simple Minds, the rock group, who is leading member of the consortium that offered to buy Celtic

Consortium withdraws Celtic bid

BY JASON NISSÉ

THE consortium led by Kenny Dalglish, the football manager, and Jim Kerr, the rock singer, has withdrawn its plan to take over Celtic, the Scottish Premier League team.

The withdrawal comes after the Celtic board rejected a bid approach by the consortium, which is backed by Bankers Trust, the US bank, which was said to have valued the club at £100 million.

The consortium said that there was no point in proceeding with the bid because Fergus McCann, chairman of Celtic and 50.1 per cent shareholder, was not of a mind to accept an offer.

Mr McCann has indicated that he will step down as chairman and sell his shares next year. However he said that existing shareholders and season ticket holders at the Glasgow club would be given first refusal in any share sale.

Chubb buys 27% stake in Lloyd's insurer for £87m

BY ROBERT COLE, CITY CORRESPONDENT

A SHAKE-UP of the Lloyd's of London insurance market continued apace yesterday as Chubb Corporation, one of North America's largest general insurers, spent £87 million taking a 27 per cent stake in Hiscox, the integrated Lloyd's insurer.

Chubb paid 225p a share, a 52 per cent premium to Hiscox's opening price yesterday, sending the stock up 22½p to close at 170p.

Prior to yesterday's news rumours had been circulating that Chubb wanted to buy Hiscox outright. Dean O'Hare, chairman of Chubb, said yesterday: "We have no present intention of making a general takeover offer for Hiscox without the full endorsement and recommendation of its board."

The stake was bought from Trident, a venture capital fund backed by the US insurance broker Marsh & McLennan and Mid Ocean Re, the reinsurer based in Bermuda.

Trident has been looking to exit for some time, and the fact that Chubb is prepared to pay a premium price for the stake suggests that it intends to be a long-term shareholder.

Bronek Masojada, the Hiscox chief executive, said his firm is happy to have Chubb as a major shareholder, adding that Chubb had indicated it would support Hiscox management if it wanted to raise equity capital.

Hiscox underwrites insurance risks as well as providing capital backing for those risks. Its current underwriting capacity is £360 million and it provides capital itself for 51 per cent of that.

Biotech deal lifts burden

BY PAUL DURMAN

BIOCOMPATIBLES International, the cash-strapped medical coatings company, has renegotiated a burdensome £120 million deal struck when the shares were among the darlings of the stock market.

The group was at one stage last year worth £1 billion, on the potential of a tie-up with Johnson & Johnson. The US company, however, pulled out of a deal to use Biocompatibles's coatings for its stents, tubes that support blood vessels in heart operations.

As a result, Biocompatibles could neither afford to buy out its Canadian partners in its Biodivysio joint venture nor pay cash due to doctors from whom it bought its stent business. Shares in Biocompatibles rose 4½p yesterday to 91p.

Coral expected to seek float after £390m sale

BY DOMINIC WALSH

CORAL, the UK's third biggest bookmaker, is expected to seek a stock market flotation within three years after its sale yesterday to Morgan Grenfell Private Equity (MGPE) for £390 million.

MGPE, part of Deutsche Bank, was declared the winner by Ladbroke after outbidding rival venture capitalist Cinven. The state-controlled Tote withdrew from the bidding last week after it was refused exclusivity on its £375 million offer.

The business MGPE is acquiring has made a profit this year of almost £40 million from turnover of about £880 million. It comprises 827 betting shops, a credit betting operation, Romford and Hove greyhound tracks and stakes in the Lucky Choice and 49's numbers games.

The sale does not include Coral's 50 shops in Ireland and eight in Jersey, worth about £26 million, which will be retained and rebranded as Ladbrokes.

The price realised will have come as a relief to Peter George, the Ladbroke chief executive, who bought Coral from Bass a year ago in an unconditional £363 million deal, only to see the Government step in to block it on competition grounds. Ladbroke, whose shares rose 13p to 238p yesterday, will emerge with a profit of £53 million.

But Jonathan Derry-Evans, an MGPE director, rebutted suggestions that he had overpaid, pointing out that, while Coral's profits had jumped about 22 per cent since Ladbroke bought it, the price MGPE was paying was just 15 per cent higher. "We're very comfortable with the price that we're paying," he said.

Bob Scott, operations director of Rank's Mecca bingo chain, has been appointed chief executive. Mr Derry-Evans said that £25 million would be invested in the business over the next two years, mainly on upgrading electronic point-of-sale systems and shop frontages. It would then be in a position to see a stock market flotation, probably in three years' time. He admitted that he would be watching Nomura's planned flotation of William Hill with interest.

Nomura, which paid £700 million for William Hill just over a year ago, has appointed Warburg Dillon Read to handle a flotation, possibly in the first quarter of 1999.

A source close to Nomura said last night: "If the market continues to go as it is, we've got a good chance of getting it away." It is considering offering shares to members of the public.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

WINNERS AND LOSERS OF 1998



It has been a roller-coaster ride for the stock market with fortunes won and lost in the most volatile trading year since the crash of 1987. Who were the winners and who were the losers in 1998? Find out this weekend in Business in The Sunday Times

PLUS: GET DOWN AND PARTY

Style gets into party mood this weekend, with a cool guide to throwing a good bash plus tips on how to spot a bad one



THE SUNDAY TIMES *IS* THE SUNDAY PAPERS

NTL buys Ipswich group

BY CHRIS AYRES

NTL, the US cable company that is considering a £160 million takeover bid for Newcastle United football club, yesterday continued its frantic acquisition programme with the purchase of Ipswich's Eastern Group Telecoms for £91 million.

The company, headed by the US entrepreneur Barclay Knapp, has bought the business from Texas Utilities, which runs electricity and gas supply services in East Anglia through its Eastern Group division. Eastern Group Telecoms generated sales of £6.3 million during the year to March 1998, and made a pre-tax profit of about £2 million.

Yesterday's deal gives NTL control of a 1,800km network of fibre-optic cables across the region and 121 radio masts that provide links for Britain's big four mobile phone companies. NTL will pay £60 million in cash for the company and £31 million in stock.

Chris Hutchings, NTL's group managing director, yesterday said the deal would complement NTL's cable franchises in the area, in particular Cambridge Cable. It will also give the company key links to international telecoms networks.

"This is an acquisition which gives us a network we were going to build ourselves anyway," Mr Hutchings said. NTL said it intended to install more cable to provide homes in the region with both television and telephone services.

Christmas blooms

FLYING FLOWERS, the troubled mail order company, delivered some cheer to shareholders yesterday in a trading statement that reported a "satisfactory Christmas despite a difficult retailing climate" (writes Matthew Barbour).

The company, which has issued two profits warnings this year, said that sales generated through its customer database have greatly improved, while its Gardening Direct and Collectables division were trading in line with expectations.

Xenova investigates Mayan cures

BY PAUL DURMAN

XENOVA, the drug development company, is turning to the ancient knowledge of the Mayan people of southern Mexico to find possible new medicines.

The Slough company is part of an international project, led by the University of Georgia, to explore the potential of the herbal remedies used by the Maya to treat everything from reproductive problems to mental disease.

The Maya, who live in the highlands of Chiapas, will work with researchers to document a system of traditional medicine that uses hundreds of local plants. Knowledge has been passed from generation to generation by word of mouth.

Xenova Discovery will seek to identify the chemical composition of the medicinal plants. It will also isolate and ferment fungi and bacteria, which it will add to its existing libraries of natural products. These are screened by drug companies looking for new pharmaceuticals.

Xenova points out that aspirin was originally derived from willow bark. And one of the American scientists involved in the project successfully treated scalding with a Mayan remedy, applying the sticky balm from the leaf of a prickly pear cactus.

Neil Robinson, head of analytical chemistry at Xenova Discovery, said work would start in the middle of next year. The University of Georgia and the Mexican Government have still to agree on how to share the financial benefit of any discoveries.

STOCK MARKET  MICHAEL CLARK

Speculators anticipate the break-up of Racal

CITY investors and brokers have high hopes for **Racal Electronics** in the new year.

Shares of the defence and telecommunications group raced up 9½p to 345½p in heavy trading as 644,940 shares changed hands. Sir Ernest Harrison, the outgoing chairman, is rumoured to want to leave on a high note and has lined up a number of disposals.

One is said to be the group's telecom arm. Some City speculators are even talking about a full bid for Racal from **GEC**, down 18½p to 537½p, after proposals to split the defence contractor into two divisions.

Brokers estimate that the break-up value for Racal could be as high as 400p.

Share prices generally failed to hold onto an early lead. Falls were recorded in thin trading, which dealers said reflected setbacks for Far Eastern markets overnight and opening losses in Frankfurt.

The FTSE 100 index gave up ground to finish 33.2 down at 5,843.3 as total turnover reached just 750 million shares. The FTSE 250 index closed 20.4 up at 4,763.3.

Hays advanced 7p to 472½p after a positive outcome to a meeting with brokers on Monday. HSBC Securities, the broker, plans to raise its pre-tax profit forecast for the current year by £3 million to £232 million. It has also reiterated its "buy" stance on the shares. Charterhouse Tilney, the broker, continues to rate the shares a "hold" and is forecasting £233 million for the year.

BAT Industries finished down 21p at 548p, after its own broker cut its profit forecast for the year from £1.23 billion to £958 million. The move reflects exceptional items stemming from the group's US court settlement. But it continues to rate the shares a "buy".

Orange, the mobile phone operator, retreated 6p to 695p as Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, the broker, told clients to switch into rival **Vodafone**, down 8½p at 971½p.

Unilever shrugged off news of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry into impulse ice cream sales with a rise of 12½p to 657½p. Safeway shook off an early fall to end the session 3½p firmer at 285½p. HSBC Securities, the broker, has upgraded its recommendation for the shares from "hold" to "add". Tesco dipped ½p to 169p. Earlier this week, Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, the US securities house, told clients to switch out of Asda, 1¼p lighter at 157¾p.



Ronnie Frost, chief executive of Hays, the shares of which rose 7p to 472½p after a meeting with brokers on Monday

Moss Bros continued to rally from a low of 109p with a rise of 4p to 133½p. There has been talk of a possible bid from **Arcadia**, the Burton and Top Shop clothes retailer, 1½p easier at 177½p. The dress hire specialist is expected to give an upbeat trading statement next month. Word is business has been buoyant with the group expected to cash in on the millennium celebrations.

Rank Group shed 3p to 220½p after Fitch IBCA, the credit rating agency, downgraded its long-term rating from A- to BBB+.

There was a belated response by **Ibstock**, up 12p to 69p, to news late on Monday, of the agreed bid by CRH, the Irish building materials group. CRH is offering 70p a share, valuing the brickmaker at £326 million.

It was the start of trading in **Informa**, the subject of a merger between LLP, publisher of *Lloyd's List*, and IBC. Shares in the enlarged publisher started life at 250p and touched 294p before closing at 258p.

Dealers reported further heavy selling of **Rosebys**, down 7p to 59p, which has now fallen from a peak of 315p this year. Winterflood Securities, the broker, claims this latest offering of stock coincides with the retailer's admission to the smaller companies index.

Speculative buying hoisted **Delphi** 26p to 318½ in a thin market. A total of 260,530 shares changed with traders prepared to make a quote in 5,000 at a time. Brokers say we could hear news soon of planned disposals by the information technology specialist.

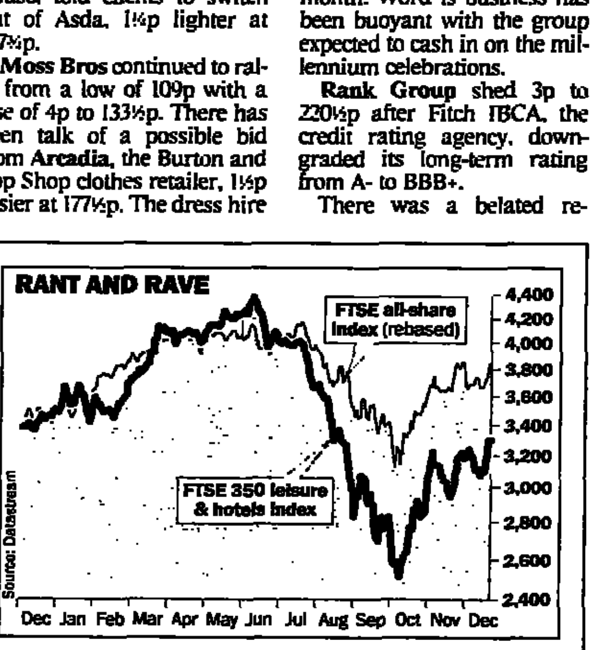
A profits warning left **Jacobs Holdings** nursing a loss of 6½p to 52p. The shipping group says start-up costs of its new logistics unit will take a toll of profits that will now come in at not less than £8.25 million. Brokers had been looking for pre-tax profits of about £10 million.

A warning about first-half profits also took a heavy toll of **Haynes Publishing**, down 17½p to 185p. Aggressive market conditions in the US will leave profits for the first six months short of the corresponding period last year.

☐ **GILT-EDGED:** Bond prices ended lower reflecting similar setbacks for overseas bond markets. The only resistance was seen at the shorter end ahead of publication this morning of the minutes of the Monetary Policy Committee meeting earlier this month.

In the futures pit, the March series of the long gilt fell 36p to £117.90 as 16,000 contracts were completed. There was a contrast among conventional issues along the yield curve with Treasury 8 per cent 2021 dropping 87p to £149.18, while at the shorter end, Treasury 7 per cent 2002 put on 1p to £107.21.

☐ **NEW YORK:** Profit takers could not prevent the Dow Jones industrial average drifting higher. At midday the index was up 17.51 points to 9,006.36.



INVESTORS have been pulling the plug on nightclub operators this year.

The decline started in the summer and has accelerated since November, says Charterhouse Tilney, the broker, which is taking an increasingly bearish view of prospects.

Christmas, falling as it does over a weekend, does not bode well for nightclubs this year. There is also the problem of last year's buoyant performance. Early indications suggest that bookings are flat year on year.

Andrew Burnett at Charterhouse gives warning that the nightclub industry will suffer over the next couple of years as consumers adjust spending patterns to the economic climate.

Mr Burnett says that First Leisure, unchanged at 206½p, and Rank Group appear the most vulnerable to the downturn. Both operators appear to be offering discounts in the regions with Northern Leisure, 2p lower at 101p, seeing a downturn in like-for-like sales.

New York (midday):	
Dow Jones	9006.36 (+17.51)
S&P Composite	1202.21 (-0.63)
Tokyo:	
Nikkei Average	13779.45 (-373.50)
Hong Kong:	
Hang Seng	10322.56 (-73.45)
Amsterdam:	
AEX Index	1155.35 (+2.90)
Sydney:	
AO	2759.8 (+21.8)
Frankfurt:	
DAX	4825.38 (+44.4)
Singapore:	
Straits	1412.40 (+14.67)
Brussels:	
BEL20	3474.79 (-30.29)
Paris:	
CAC-40	3828.47 (+17.06)
Zurich:	
SKA Gen	1344.10 (-12.70)
London:	
FT 30	3518.4 (-18.0)
FTSE 100	5843.3 (+20.4)
FTSE 250	4763.3 (+20.4)
FTSE 350	2748.6 (-11.4)
FTSE Eurotop 100	2881.38 (-0.41)
FTSE All-Share	2649.67 (-9.97)
FTSE Non Financials	2699.33 (-6.57)
FTSE Fixed Interest	156.14 (-0.60)
FTSE Govt Secs	114.95 (-0.37)
Bargains	51535
SEAQ Volume	750.6m
US$	1.6780 (-0.0029)
German Mark	2.8105 (-0.0020)
Exchange Index	101.1 (-0.1)
Bank of England official close (4pm)	
£:ECU	1.4349
£:SDR	1.1959
RPI	164.4 Nov (3.0%) Jan 1987=100
RPIX	162.0 Nov (2.5%) Jan 1987=100

RECENT ISSUES

AIM VCT	100	...	
Abbey Natl Dublin Inv.	95½	...	
Artisan (UK)	4	...	
BFS O'seas Inc & Gwth Cap	68½	...	
BFS O'seas Inc & Gwth Inc	117½	-	½
Bioglan Pharma	262½	-	1
Charriol	117½	...	
Collective Assets Trust	117	...	
Financial Objects	241½	...	
First Active	302½	+	4
Five Arr Uts Cv Ln 2040	116¾	+	½
MHT Secs Zero Div Pf	53	...	
Marley B	11	...	
Monthly High Inc Geared	51½	...	
Natl Bldg Mtls Cv Pf	105	...	
Natural Building Mtls	5	...	
Piccadilly Growth Ts	96½	...	
REXAM B (100)	95½	+	½
Singer & Frd AIM VCT	100	...	
Willington	85	...	
Xenova Warrants	13½	...	

RISES:

Stock	Close	Chng	Chng%
Royalblue	337½	+ 50	+ 17.3
Hiscox	170	+ 22½	+ 15.2
Goldsmiths Gp	112	+ 13	+ 13.1
Kelsey Ind	340	+ 30	+ 9.6
Delphi	318½	+ 26	+ 8.8
Sema Gp	577	+ 41	+ 7.6
Chiroscience	245	+ 15	+ 6.5
Jarvis	626½	+ 33½	+ 5.6
Ericsson B	1378⅛	+ 68¾	+ 5.2
Goldshield	262½	+ 13	+ 5.2
Misys	403	+ 19½	+ 5.0
Parity	517½	+ 22½	+ 4.5

FALLS:

Stock	Close	Chng	Chng%
Rosebys	59	- 7	- 10.6
Randfontein	123¼	- 14¼	- 10.3
JBA Hldgs	167½	- 17½	- 9.4
Driefontein	234¾	- 23¾	- 9.1
Haynes Pub	185	- 17½	- 8.6
Korea Euro	186¼	- 14½	- 7.2
Fuji Bank Y	209½	- 14½	- 6.4
AB Food	571	- 38	- 6.2
Durban	161¼	- 10	- 5.8
Schroders	1086	- 59	- 5.1
Schroders N/V	920	- 50	- 5.1
Schrod Korea	283	- 14½	- 4.8
Dai Ichi Kan Y	331¼	- 16¾	- 4.7
Forth Ports	551½	- 26	- 4.5
Diagonal	965	- 45	- 4.4
CRH	1049	- 43	- 3.9
Perpetual Jap	27½	- 1	- 3.5
Hall Eng	70	- 2½	- 3.4
Thorntons	224½	- 8	- 3.4
ML Laboratories	72½	- 2½	- 3.3

Share buybacks and the admission of failure

THE share buyback has settled itself firmly in management psyche as one of the things that ought to be done from time to time, and in increasingly numerous corporate situations.

It is unlikely that the popularity of buybacks will wane quickly. Yet the objections to share buybacks are many and should not be forgotten.

First and foremost, it is far from clear that they actually work. The common motivation for buybacks is to enhance share prices by reducing the number of shares in issue. With fewer shares, the earnings per share should increase and as share prices are still, in large part, determined as being a multiple of earnings, share prices should rise.

The failure of the buyback is well illustrated by NFC, the transport group. As the graph below shows, its shares have responded to the initiation of a buyback programme by sliding lower and lower, in actual terms, and relative to its sector and the market as a whole.

Research by JP Morgan, the invesment bank, suggests that NFC is unusual. According to Morgan, about twice as many companies' shares outperform after the announcement of buyback plans than underperform. The graph above illustrates Boots's share price since it began buying back stock in 1996 and it would appear that the strategy has worked well. Significant reductions have been made in the numbers of shares in issue and investors have enjoyed significant rises, actually and relatively, in the value of their shares.

But can the outperformance be genuinely and definitively laid at the door of the buyback? Might it not be simply that Boots has outperformed because it is a good, well-run company and NFC has underperformed because it is not?

It also seems likely that any benefits that do accrue are transitory. Where the primary benefit of a buyback impacts on sentiment this is especially the case. What residual influence, for example, do the buybacks by Barclays have after last summer's bad debt tribulations and the autumn scarred by the shock departure of Martin Taylor, the chief executive?

Buybacks betray management's primary duty to shareholders. It is their responsibility to run a business to increase profits. It used to be that returning capital to shareholders was an admission of failure. The status has not changed simply because current fashion makes them more acceptable.

Financial engineering of the sort that is exemplified by buybacks is no replacement for good management of assets. The corporate goal remains enhancement of earnings per share but attempting to meet the goal by reducing the number of shares in issue is little more than a confidence trick.

Fiddling with the financial structure of the company by distributing capital through buybacks also comes close to manipulation of the share price. It is not the role of management to attempt to exert such direct control over the share price. That is down to investors — who do it anyway, whether or not directors spend vast amounts of their money in share support operations.

Moreover, it is easy to suspect managements are not driven by motives that are entirely pure. After all, increasing proportions of directors' remuneration packages are tied to share values. The alignment of management and shareholder interests by increasing the importance of shares in remuneration packages has clear advantages. However, if buybacks distort and corrupt management ambition, interest alignment shows a downside too.

Buybacks have some merit where they are being used as a substitute dividend, but where the buyback is executed by purchasing openly traded shares the distribution is iniquitous. If the object of the exercise is to return cash to shareholders, the buyback may have tax advantages, but it is also hugely unfair.

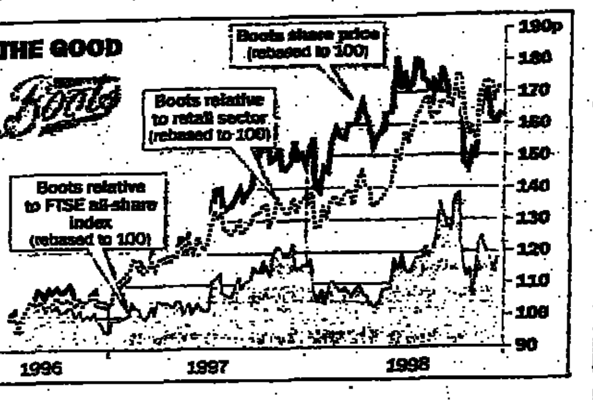
There again, buybacks are acclaimed for reasons of tax efficiency. Clearly no one wants to pay unnecessary tax but there is a danger that tax avoidance becomes the aim of corporate activity where it should be profit generation.

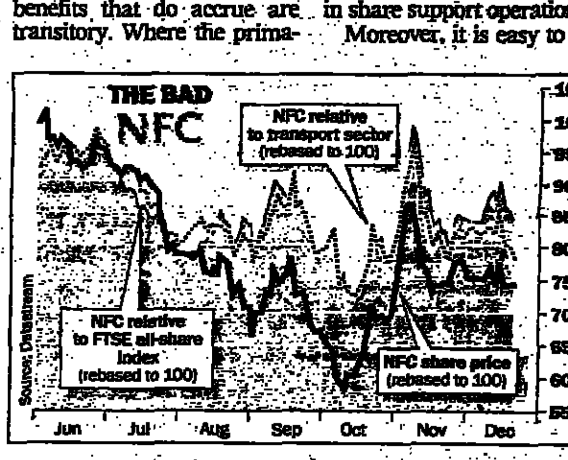
There is a place for share buybacks. If a company does not need capital, or believes it is more efficient to use debt rather than equity, it is justifiable to buy back shares. But if the intention is to influence the market price, investors should discourage their use.

Even then, investors would not be acting unreasonably if they required management resignations among those who could not think of anything better to do with cash generated within the business than spend it on their own company's stock.

At the very least directors should be obliged to take a cut in salary equivalent to the narrowing of the company's capital base brought about by the buyback. Perhaps then they would think twice.

ROBERT COLE AND MANUS COSTELLO





COMMODITIES

LIFFE

COCOA

Dec	884-874	Mar	1017-1010
Mar	911-910	May	1031-1026
May	932-930	Jul	unq
Jul	952-950	Sep	
Sep	972-970		
Dec	995-992		Volume: 5278

ROBUSTA COFFEE

Jan	1840-1835	Sep	1705-1690
Mar	1775-1770	Nov	1680 SLR
May	1735-1726	Jan	1660-1640
Jul	1718-1710		Volume: 4519

WHITE SUGAR (FOB)

Reuters		Oct	228 5-26.9
Spot: 234.8		Dec	232 5-30.0
Mar	234.5-34.1	Mar	237 5-35 0
May	234.8-34.4	May	241.5-34 0
Aug	234.5-32.8		Volume: 2195

MEAT & LIVESTOCK COMMISSION
Average fatstock prices at representative markets on December 21

(p/kg lw)	Pig	Sheep	Cattle
GB	52.94	64.22	90.75
(+/-)	-2.10	+3.88	+2.56
Eng/Wales	52.75	64.79	90.36
(+/-)	-2.32	+0.49	+2.57
%	-27.0	-42.0	-52.0
Scotland	56.85	61.71	93.17
(+/-)	+1.33	+0.17	+1.38
%	-14.0	-34.0	-31.0

ICIS-LOR (London 6.00pm)
CRUDE OILS ($/barrel FOB)

Brent Physical	9.75	+0.20
Brent 15 day (Feb)	9.95	+0.10
Brent 15 day (Mar)	10.10	(n/c)
W Texas Intermediate (Feb)	11.10	-0.05
W Texas Intermediate (Mar)	11.40	(n/c)

PRODUCTS ($/MT)
Spot CIF NW Europe (prompt delivery)

	Bid	Offer
Premium Unld	105 (-1)	108 (-1)
Gasoil EEC	96 (+3)	98 (+2)
3.5 Fuel Oil	56 (+2)	58 (+1)
Naphtha	108 (n/c)	111 (n/c)

IPE FUTURES (GNI Ltd)
GAS OIL

Jan	94.750-95.00	Apr	101.25-101.50
Feb	97.00-97.50	May	103.00-104.00
Mar	99.00-99.25		Vol: 15457

BRENT (6.00pm)

Feb	9.95-9.96	May	10.56-10.61
Mar	10.09-10.11	Jun	10.82-10.86
Apr	10.33-10.35		Vol: 37696

GNI LONDON GRAIN FUTURES

LIFFE WHEAT (close £/t)		LIFFE BARLEY (close £/t)	
Jan	77.00	Jan	76.25
Mar	78.20	Mar	78.15
May	80.10	May	79.85
Jul	82.10	Sep	78.50
Sep	79.85	Nov	80.50
Volume: 289		Volume: 49	

LIFFE POTATO (£/t)

	Open	Close
Mar	unq	243.0
Apr	315.0	319.5
May	unq	329.5
		Volume: 71

RUBBER (No 1 RSS Cif p/k)
Jan 46.25-46.75

LIFFE BIFFEX (GNI Ltd $10/pt)

	High	Low	Close
Jan 99	815	815	815
Feb 99	830	830	830
Mar 99	unq	—	857
Jul 99	unq	—	815
Vol: 10 lots			Open interest: 2342

Index 806 -7

LONDON METAL EXCHANGE (Official) (Volume prev day) Rudolf Wolff

	Cash	3mth	Vol
Copper Gde A ($/tonne)	1442.5-1443.0	1472.5-1473.0	1653350
Lead ($/tonne)	494.00-495.00	473.00-474.00	164650
Zinc Spec Hi Gde ($/tonne)	940.00-940.50	959.00-960.00	544325
Tin ($/tonne)	5115.0-5120.0	5125.0-5130.0	29680
Aluminium Hi Gde ($/tonne)	1230.0-1230.5	1243.0-1244.0	1772125
Nickel ($/tonne)	3825.0-3835.0	3895.0-3900.0	128196

LONDON FINANCIAL FUTURES

	Period	Open	High	Low	Sett	Vol
Long Gilt	Dec 98	118.14	118.16	117.92	117.94	200
Previous open interest 103106	Mar 99	118.20	118.28	117.57	117.90	16935
German Govt Bond (Bund)	Mar 99				115.27	0
Previous open interest 0						
Five Year Gilt	Dec 98				109.41	0
Previous open interest 395	Mar 99				109.41	0
Italian Govt Bond (BTP)	Mar 99	113.75	113.75	112.98	113.08	15415
Previous open interest 39080						
Japanese Govt Bond (JGB)	Mar 99	129.53	130.70	129.00	130.70	4842
	Jun 99				131.58	0
Three Mth Sterling	Mar 99	94.280	94.370	94.280	94.370	11385
	Jun 99	94.640	94.730	94.640	94.720	10791
Previous open interest 1008311	Sep 99	94.760	94.830	94.760	94.820	8858
Three Mth Euromark	Jan 99	96.800	96.810	96.795	96.795	750
Previous open interest 2008166	Jun 99	96.960	96.965	96.945	96.950	26761
Three Mth Eurolira	Mar 99	96.900	96.900	96.880	96.875	3074
Previous open interest 509315	Jun 99	96.960	96.960	96.940	96.950	1600
Three Mth Euroswiss	Mar 99	98.330	98.370	98.310	98.360	10496
Previous open interest 138975	Jun 99	98.250	98.300	98.240	98.270	3904
Three Mth Euro	Jan 99				96.795	0
Previous open interest 10492	Jun 99				96.950	0
FTSE 100	Mar 99	5905.0	5932.0	5855.0	5868.0	12939
Previous open interest 196958	Jun 99	5960.0	5960.0	5960.0	5906.0	30

MONEY RATES

Base Rates: Clearing Banks 6¼ Finance House 7½
Discount Market Loans: O/night high: 7½ Low 5½ Week fixed: 5¾
Treasury Bills (Dis): Buy: 2 mth 5¾; 3 mth 5¾. Sell: 2 mth 5¾; 3 mth 5¾

	1 mth	2 mth	3 mth	6 mth	12 mth
Prime Bank Bills (Dis):	6⅛-6⅛	6⅛-6⅛	6⅛-6⅛	5⅞-5⅞	
Sterling Money Rates:	6⅞-6⅞	6⅛-6⅛	6⅛-6⅛	6-5⅞	5⅞-5⅜
Interbank:	6⅞-6⅞	6⅛-6⅛	6⅛-6⅛	6-5⅞	5⅞-5⅜
Overnight: open 6¼, close 6					
Local Authority Deps:	6⅞	n/a	6¼	5⅞	5⅞
Sterling CDs:	6⅞-6⅞	6⅞-6⅞	6⅛-6⅛	5⅞-5⅞	5⅞-5⅝
Dollar CDs:	5.52	n/a	5.18	5.03	5.00
Building Society CDs:	6⅞-6⅞	6⅛-6⅞	6⅛-6⅛	5⅞-5⅞	5⅞-5⅞

EUROPEAN MONEY DEPOSITS

Currency	7 day	1 mth	3 mth	6 mth	Call
Dollar:	5⅛-4⅞	5⅛-5⅛	5⅛-5⅛	5⅛-4⅞	5⅛-4⅞
Deutschemark:	n/a	3⅞-3⅞	3⅞-3⅞	3⅛-3	3⅛-2⅞
French Franc:	...	3⅛-3⅛	3⅛-3⅛	3⅛-3⅛	3⅛-2⅞
Swiss Franc:	...	1⅛-1⅛	1⅛-1⅛	1⅛-1⅛	1⅛-⅞
Yen:	...	⅞-⅞	⅞-⅞	⅞-⅞	1-par

GOLD/PRECIOUS METALS

Bullion: Open: $288.60-288.90 Close: $287.00-287.50 High: $288.70-289.20
Low: $287.00-287.50 AM: $288.70 PM: $287.25
Krugerrand: $293.00-295.00 (£174.00-176.00)
Platinum: $345.00 (£205.35) Silver: $4.925 (£2.935) Palladium: $310.00 (£184.58)

STERLING SPOT AND FORWARD RATES

Mkt Rates for December 22	Range	Close	1 month	3 Month
Amsterdam	3.1618-3.1696	3.1666-3.1696	⅞-⅞pr	2⅞-2⅞pr
Brussels	57.860-58.040	57.947-58.035	18-13pr	46-38pr
Copenhagen	10.669-10.701	10.689-10.696	⅞-⅛pr	⅞-⅛pr
Dublin	1.1281-1.1341	1.1315-1.1325	34-28pr	87-78pr
Frankfurt	2.8050-2.8120	2.8101-2.8120	⅞-⅞pr	2⅞-2pr
Lisbon	287.60-288.37	288.09-288.33	⅞-⅞pr	2⅞-1⅞pr
Madrid	238.73-239.40	239.15-239.40	66-57pr	179-182pr
Milan	2775.8-2793.4	2783.1-2785.1	90-74pr	219-197pr
Montreal	2.6019-2.6086	2.6028-2.6054	0.34-0.27pr	0.64-0.53pr
New York	1.6777-1.6814	1.6777-1.6783	0.133-0.112pr	0.43-0.40pr
Oslo	12.863-13.475	13.453-13.475	⅞-⅞ds	⅞-⅞ds
Paris	9.4060-9.4340	9.4238-9.4334	2⅞-2⅞pr	7⅞-6⅞pr
Stockholm	13.441-13.494	13.453-13.476	⅞-⅞pr	1-⅞pr
Tokyo	195.81-197.21	196.12-196.34	1-1pr	2⅞-2⅞pr
Vienna	19.732-19.787	19.769-19.783	⅞-⅞pr	1⅞-1⅞pr
Zurich	2.2817-2.2936	2.2911-2.2936	1-⅞pr	2⅞-2⅞pr

Source: Extel Premium = pr Discount = ds

Australia	1.6260-1.6286
Austria	11.78-11.79
Belgium (Com)	34.55-34.56
Canada	1.5508-1.5518
Denmark	6.3717-6.3757
France	5.6210-5.6220
Germany	1.6750-1.6755
Hong Kong	7.7432-7.7437
Ireland	1.4820-1.4827
Italy	1659.20-1659.50
Japan	117.29-117.39
Malaysia	3.7997-3.8003
Netherlands	1.8876-1.8881
Norway	7.6800-7.6900
Portugal	171.72-171.80
Singapore	1.6495-1.6515
Spain	142.55-142.65
Sweden	8.0263-8.0363
Switzerland	1.3654-1.3664

OTHER STERLING

Argentina peso*	1.6777-1.6800
Australia dollar	2.7309-2.7342
Bahrain dinar	0.6260-0.6400
Brazil real*	2.0239-2.0284
China yuan	n/a
Cyprus pound	0.8205-0.8395
Finland markka	8.4750-8.6120
Greece drachma	466.00-476.80
Hong Kong dollar	12.9856-12.9960
India rupee	70.64-72.24
Indonesia rupiah	12539.00-13539.00
Kuwait dinar KD	0.5015-0.5125
Malaysia ringgit	6.3732-6.3767
New Zealand dollar	3.2324-3.2377
Pakistan rupee	79.30 Buy
Saudi Arabia riyal	6.0475-6.1625
Singapore dollar	2.7667-2.7709
S Africa rand (com)	9.5720-10.172
U A E dirham	6.1025-6.2385

Barclays Treasury * Lloyds Bank

LIFFE OPTIONS

	Series	Calls Jan	Apr	Jul	Puts Jan	Apr	Jul
ASDA	140	20½	25	32	1½	7	11
(*158)	160	8	16	22	9	16½	21
Abbey Natl	1250	53½	111½	146½	47½	103½	123
(*1251)	1300	32½	88	122½	79½	131½	149½
Alld Dom	550	27½	56	72½	20½	44½	59
(*555½)	600	8½	32½	52	52	72	87½
BAA	650	49½	77½	92	9½	34	42
(*688)	700	20	48½	66½	30½	56½	66
BAT Ind	700	43	—	—	21	—	—
(*723)	750	17	—	—	—	—	—
Barclays	1300	75	150	193½	56½	130	162½
(*1313)	1350	51½	126½	170½	83	156½	189
Bass	850	44	94	123	35½	63	93½
(*853)	900	23	70½	99½	65	90	119
Boots	1000	68½	121	139½	24	64½	83
(*1040)	1050	49	95	119½	46½	88	108½
Br Airways	360	32	57½	68½	12	30½	43½
(*378)	390	16½	44	55	26½	48	59
BP	850	55	95	119	23	58½	77
(*878)	900	29½	68½	94½	48	81½	102½
Br Steel	80	9½	14	18½	1½	5	11
(*88)	90	3½	9	14	5½	10	16½
C&W	700	62½	109	136½	18	56½	79½
(*738½)	750	34	82	112	39½	82	106½
CGU Plc	900	59½	111½	148	34½	93	120
(*921½)	950	35	86½	125½	61	118	147
GlaxoW	2000	88½	190½	246	66½	161½	194½
(*2013½)	2100	47	140	201½	122	214	247½
HSBC	1600	107	194	247	50½	147	178½
(*1649½)	1700	58	146	201	102	195½	231
Halifax	850	46	80	104	23	60	75
(*869½)	900	33	56½	80	50	87½	101
ICI	500	49½	73½	88	15	33½	60
(*532)	550	21½	48	66	37½	73½	86½
Land Sec	750	39	69½	80	16	33½	46
(*773)	800	14	45	55	42	58	72
M&S	390	29	48	57½	9	24½	35
(*409½)	420	13	34	42½	23	39½	51½
Natl Pwr	500	35½	59	70	12	27½	43½
(*518½)	550	10	35½	47	38	52½	71½
Nat West	1150	74½	135½	177½	41	105	130
(*1179)	1200	50	111½	151	66½	131½	156
Reed Intl	460	33½	57	69	13	38	47
(*477)	500	15	38½	51	33½	60½	69
Reuters	600	55	96	109	23½	53½	66½
(*632)	650	27½	52	86	47	79	93½
RylBSoc	460	45	69	83	9½	39	49½
(*493½)	500	21½	46½	64	26	58½	70½
Safeway	280	16	31	38½	10	20½	33
(*284½)	300	7	21½	29	21½	34	44½
Sainsbury	460	32	52½	63	9½	23½	35
(*481)	500	12	34	43	29	43	56
Shell	360	22	37	45½	11	27	34
(*369½)	390	7	22	30½	27½	43½	48½
SmKl Bch	750	62	100½	124½	17	47	64½
(*792)	800	32½	74½	90	37	70	84
Std Chta	650	45	83½	107	26	67½	84
(*668)	700	23	61½	84½	54½	95½	111
Thames W	1114	76½	100½	—	18½	42½	—
(*1166½)	1168	44	70	—	40½	67	—
Vodafone	950	61½	120	155½	32½	81½	111
(*974)	1000	36½	95	132½	58	106½	137½
Woolwich	330	33½	44	50½	4	14	19
(*356½)	360	14½	28	35½	15	28½	34
Zeneca	2600	146	260	370½	107½	209	283½
(*2620½)	2700	98½	210½	323½	160½	260	335½
Tesco	167	11½	—	—	9½	—	—
(*168½)	183	5½	—	—	19	—	—
Utd Bisc	238	17	—	—	11½	—	—
(*242)	251	7½	—	—	25½	—	—

	Series	Calls Jan	May	Aug	Puts Jan	May	Aug
All&Leic	850	47½	89	114	23	57	71½
(*871)	900	23½	65	87	49	83	97

	Series	Calls Feb	May	Aug	Puts Feb	May	Aug
BTR	120	11	15½	17½	11½	17	18½
(*122)	130	7	11½	13½	17½	23½	25
Blue Circ	300	33	40½	48	10½	25	27
(*319)	330	17	26	33½	24½	41	43
Br Aero	500	54	81½	101	23	52½	58
(*525½)	550	31	57½	78½	48½	78½	84½
Br Telcm	850	77½	115½	138	34	64	80
(*894½)	900	50	92½	113½	56½	87	105
Cadbury	1000	82	120½	156	44	83	105½
(*1027)	1050	55½	95	132½	67½	106	131
Carlton Cms	500	61½	82½	93	17½	34½	55
(*538½)	550	34	59	69½	39½	59	81
Diageo	650	76½	104½	123½	30	53½	69
(*693½)	700	49	79	101½	53	78	95
Gallaher	420	26½	38½	50½	25	38½	45
(*420)	460	11	23	35	50	63	69½
GEC	500	61½	85½	98½	20½	39	47½
(*539)	550	34	60½	75	43	63	73
Hanson	460	34	49	58	23	39	43
(*467½)	500	17	32	40½	46	62	65½
Imp Tob	600	57½	72	82½	15½	26	34½
(*639½)	650	29	44½	56½	37	48½	58½
Kingfshr	625	53	—	—	34	—	—
(*638½)	650	41	67½	81	47	75½	90
Lasmo	100	14	19½	21	8½	13	12
(*104½)	110	9	15	16½	14	18½	17½
Ladbroke	220	30	39½	47	10	22	27½
(*237½)	240	18	28½	38½	19	33	38½
LucasVar	200	15½	23	33	11	16	20
(*204)	220	8½	14½	21½	23	27½	31½
P&O	700	61½	86½	110	41	68	85
(*716½)	750	38½	64½	77	68½	96	104½
Prudentl	900	85	124	151½	40	77	96½
(*935)	950	59½	100	128½	64½	102	124½
Rio Tinto	700	55½	77½	92	33	64	71½
(*716½)	750	31½	54	70½	59	88	99
R-Royce	240	21	31	41½	13	21	28½
(*246)	260	12½	21½	32½	24	31½	37

	Series	Calls Mar	Jun	Sep	Puts Mar	Jun	Sep
BG	390	30	37½	52	22	35½	43
(*392)	420	16½	26	38½	39½	52½	60
BSkyB	460	39	57½	70	30½	44	52
(*468)	500	22½	39½	52	53	66½	75
Br Bio	30	7	8½	11	3	4½	6
(*33½)	35	4½	6½	9	6	7	9
Centrica	110	14	18½	22½	4½	7½	8½
(*118)	120	8½	14	18	9½	12	14½
Dixons	800	84½	115½	138½	56½	84½	97½
(*821½)	850	59	92½	115½	85	110½	123½
EMI	390	47	64½	77½	36	45½	58½
(*403)	420	32½	51½	63½	51½	61½	74½
Granada	1050	92½	140½	170	83½	101½	132½
(*1065½)	1100	68½	117	147	110	121½	158
GUS	600	64½	85	101½	31½	38½	52
(*634)	650	40	60	76½	55½	63½	76
Lloyds TSB	850	91½	123	147	64½	82	105½
(*874)	900	67½	100	127	89	112	128½
Lasmo	300	29	38	45½	17½	23½	30½
(*317)	330	15	24	32	34	40	47
Norwich	420	50½	63	77½	23	37½	47½
(*442)	450	30	44½	58	43	58	67½
Orange	650	87	124	149	41½	63	80
(*697)	700	71½	101	127	67	90	106½
Railtrack	1500	150½	213½	253½	82½	118½	150½
(*1557½)	1600	101	165½	207	128½	169½	201
Scot Pwr	600	67½	80½	93½	28½	41	57½
(*632)	650	45	55½	69	52	65½	76
Tarmac	110	13	16½	19	8	12½	13
(*114)	120	9	12	14½	13½	18	18½
Tomkins	260	33½	41	47	14	21½	28½
(*278)	280	23	31½	37½	23½	31½	38½
Unilever	650	58	71½	89	43½	63	67½
(*656)	700	33	49½	66	70	88	95

December 22 Total: 23285 Calls: 10150 Puts: 13145

FTSE INDEX (*5843½)

Strike	Calls Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Jun	Puts Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Jun
5650	284½	414	488½	544	—	84	187½	277	375½	—
5700	247	380½	458½	509½	649½	98½	206	294½	392	449½
5750	211	350½	425	475½	—	114	225	312	408½	—
5800	181	320½	395	441½	589½	135½	244½	329½	424½	487
5850	151½	291	361½	408	—	157½	264	347	440	—
5900	122	261	329½	374	530	180½	284½	364½	455	525½
5950	100½	231½	298	340	—	211	306	383	469	—
6000	79	209½	274½	305	472	241	334	409	481	567½

December 22 Total: 1511 Calls: 437 Puts: 1074 *Underlying security price

FTSE 100 VOLUMES

3I	1,508	Marks Spr	7,101
ASDA Gp	3,004	Misys	1,663
Abbey NB	1,630	Nat Grid	2,318
Allnce & Leic	652	Nat Power	3,531
Allied Dom	1,584	NatWst Bk	3,380
Allied Zrch	4,086	Norwich Un	2,140
Amvescap	1,016	Nycmd Amr	892
AB Foods	381	Orange	2,017
Bk of Scot	2,256	P & O	2,167
BAA	1,572	Pearson	647
Barclays	2,850	PowerGen	851
Bass	1,332	Prudential	2,638
BG	3,599	Railtrack	532
Billiton	4,390	Reckitt Col	1,237
BOC	867	Reed Intl	1,200
Boots	1,335	Rentokil	3,992
BAe	3,568	Reuters	3,036
BA	2,199	Rio Tinto	857
Brit Am Tob	2,425	Rolls Royce	1,469
Brit Energy	919	Ryl & Sun	3,557
Br Land	777	Ryl Bk Scl	1,343
BP	11,027	Safeway	3,675
BSkyB	1,473	Sainsbury	1,629
BT	7,957	Schroders	181
BTR	8,320	Scot & New	821
CGU	1,723	Scot Power	2,087
COLT Telecom	1,201	Securicor	718
Cable Wire	2,702	Sema Gp	617
Cadbury	1,510	Sven Trent	523
Carlton Cms	962	Shell Trans	16,609
Centrica	48,281	Siebe	5,233
Compass Gp	897	Smiths Ind	280
Diageo	3,829	SmKl Bch	5,839
EMI	6,670	Southern Elec	
Gen Elec	3,167	Stagecoach	1,091
GKN	1,187	Std Chartd	1,837
Glaxo Well	4,408	Sun Life	289
Granada	1,455	TeleWest	4,627
GUS	4,317	Tesco	7,985
GRE	3,087	Thames W	495
ICI	1,070	Tomkins	1,282
HSBC	1,994	Unilever	2,939
Halifax	2,497	Utd News	1,535
Hays	1,004	Utd Utilities	943
Kingfisher	812	Vodafone	4,487
Ladbroke	8,176	WPP	1,353
Land Secs	405	Whitbread	356
Legal & Gn	1,296	Williams	538
Lloyds TSB	5,037	Woolwich	1,174
LucasVarity	1,189	Zeneca	1,385

NEW YORK

	Dec 23 midday	Dec 22 close
AEP	46⅞	47⅛
AMP Inc	50¾	50⅞
AMR Corp	58¾	59¾
AT & T	73⅞	74⅜
Abbott Labs	46⅜	46⅞
Advanced Micro	28	28⅜
Aetna Life	79	79⅝
Alltel	41⅝	41⅛
Air Prod & Chem	36⅞	38⅛
AirTouch Comm	63⅞	63⅞
Albertsons	64⅛	64⅜
Alcan Aluminum	27	27⅛
Allied Signal	42⅛	42¾
Alum Co of Am	69⅞	69¼
Amerada Hess	50⅞	50⅛
Amer Express	101⅝	100¾
Amer Genl Corp	73⅝	74⅛
Amer Home Pr	51⅞	51⅞
Amer Intl	98	100⅛
Amer Online	118	118⅞
Amer Stores	37⅛	37⅜
Amer Standard	32½	32⅜
Ameritech	60⅞	61⅞
Amgen	101⅞	100⅞
Amoco	56⅞	56⅞
Andrew Corp	18⅞	17⅜
Anheuser-Busch	63⅞	63⅝
Apple Computer	36½	35⅜
Archer Daniels	15¾	15¾
Armco	3⅞	4
Armstrong Wrld	61⅞	61⅞
Asarco	15⅝	15⅝
Atl Richfield	65¾	65⅜
Atmel Corp	15⅜	16⅛
Auto Data Pro	76⅞	77⅜
Avery Dennison	43⅞	43⅛
Avon Products	38⅞	40⅞
Baker Hughes	16⅞	16⅞
Baltimore Gas & E	30⅞	31⅛
Banc One	52⅞	53⅞
Bank of NY	36⅝	38⅛
BankAmerica	38⅝	40⅝
Bankers Tr Cp	84⅞	84⅞
Bausch & Lomb	55⅝	56
Baxter Intl	63⅜	63⅞
Becton Dickinson	48⅛	47
Bell Atlantic	57⅜	56⅜
BellSouth	90⅛	89
Best Foods	54⅞	55⅜
Black & Decker	56⅝	55⅞
Block (H&R)	43⅞	43⅛
Boeing	31⅞	31⅞
Boise Cascade	29⅞	28¾
Boston Scien	25⅛	25⅞
Bristol Myers Sq	121⅞	128⅞
Browning Ferris	28⅜	28⅜
Brunswick	22⅞	22⅝
Burlington Nthn	34⅛	33⅞
CBS Corp	28⅞	28⅞
CMS Energy Corp	48	49⅛
CSX	41⅜	41⅞
Campbell Soup	53⅞	54
Carolina Pwr	47½	47⅞
Case Corp	19⅜	20½
Caterpillar	41⅜	42⅜
Central & SW	27⅜	28
Champion Intl	38⅞	39⅜
Chase Manhat	70⅝	72⅛
Chevron Corp	84	84⅜
Chiron Corp	24⅞	24⅞
Chubb Corp	64⅛	65⅜
Cigna Corp	76⅞	77⅜
Cisco Sys	90⅞	94⅞
Citigroup	50⅜	51⅞
Clorox	113⅞	113⅞
Coastal Corp	34⅞	34⅞
Coca Cola	65⅛	65⅜
Coca Cola Ent	33⅛	33
Colgate-Palm	89⅞	89⅜
Columbia Energy	57½	58⅛
Columbia/HCA	22⅛	22⅞
Compaq Comp	43⅞	44⅛
Comp Ass Intl	41⅞	40⅛
Conagra	30⅛	28⅛
Conseco	20⅜	20½
Cons Edison	53⅜	53⅜
Cons Nat Gas	53⅜	53⅜
Cooper Inds	46⅜	46⅜
Corning Inc	43	43⅞
[illegible]	48⅜	48⅞
Crestar Finl	70⅛	70⅜
Crown Cork	29⅞	30⅛
Dana Corp	38⅞	38⅜
Dayton Hudson	48⅞	48⅞
Deere	29⅛	29⅜
Dell Computer	71⅞	71⅞
Delta Air Lines	49⅛	50⅛
Deluxe Corp	35⅞	35⅞
Dillard Dept St	27⅛	27
Disney (Walt)	30⅛	30⅛
Dole Food Inc	29⅜	29
Dollar Gen Corp	25⅛	25⅞
Dominion Res	47⅞	47⅞
Donnelley (RR)	40⅞	40⅞
Dover Corp	33⅞	35⅛
Dow Chemical	89⅞	89⅜
Dow Jones	47⅜	47⅞
Duke Energy	63⅜	64
Du Pont	53⅝	54⅜
Eastman Chem	44⅞	45⅛
Eastman Kodak	73½	74
Eaton Corp	68⅞	69⅛
Edison Intl	28⅛	28⅛
Elect Data Sys	47⅞	48⅛
Emerson Elec	59⅞	59⅞
Engelhard Corp	19⅛	19⅞
Enron Corp	57	58⅜
Entergy	31⅞	32⅞
Equity Off Props	24⅞	24⅛
Exxon	75⅛	74⅞
FDX Holding	84⅞	84⅞
FMC Corp	52⅞	53⅞
FPL Group	62⅛	62⅛
Fifth Third Banc	69⅛	70⅞
Fleet Finl Grp	43⅛	44⅛
Fluor Corp	41⅞	41⅞
Ford Motor	55⅞	55⅞
Fort James	37⅞	37½
Fortune Brands	31¼	31½
Franklin Res	43⅛	43½
GTE Corp	67⅞	68
Gannett	65⅞	64⅞
Gap Inc Del	52⅞	51⅛
Gateway 2000	57⅞	54⅞
Gen Dynamics	54⅞	55⅛
Gen Electric	98⅛	98⅜
Genl Mills	76⅜	76⅜
Gen Motors	73⅞	73⅞
Gen Reinsurance	201½	200⅞
Gen Inst Cp	32⅛	33⅛
Genuine Parts	31⅛	33⅛
Georgia Pac	56⅞	56⅞
Gillette	47⅜	47⅞
Glaxo Wellc ADR	67¼	68⅞
Goodrich (BF)	32⅞	33⅞
Goodyear Tire	50⅜	52⅞
Great Lakes	38⅞	39⅞
Halliburton	32⅛	31⅞
Harcourt General	51⅛	51
Heinz (HJ)	56⅞	58⅛
Hercules	25⅞	26⅛
Hershey Foods	61⅛	61⅛
Hewlett Packard	66⅞	65⅛
Hilton Hotels	19⅛	19⅛
Home Depot	59⅜	59⅜
Homestake Mng	8⅞	9⅛
Honeywell	72⅞	73⅞
Household Intl	37⅞	38⅛
Houston Inds	32⅞	32½
Humana	18⅛	18⅞
Ikon Office	8⅜	8⅞
Illinois Tool	58⅞	59⅜
Illinova	24⅛	25⅛
INCO	10⅜	10⅞
Ingersoll Rand	43⅜	47⅛
Inland Steel	16	16⅞
Intel Corp	119⅜	122⅞
IBM	178	176½
Intl Flav & Fr	42⅛	42⅞
Intl Paper	42⅞	42⅞
Johnson & Johnson	77⅜	78⅞
Kellogg	33⅛	34
Kerr-McGee	38⅛	37⅞
Keyspan Energy	28⅞	28⅞
Kimberly-Clark	52⅜	52⅜
Kmart	13⅞	14⅞
Knight-Ridder	50⅞	50⅞
Lilly (Eli)	83½	84⅞
Limited Inc	25⅜	26⅛
Lincoln Nat	81⅞	82⅜
Litton	58⅜	60
Liz Claiborne	30⅞	30⅞
Lockheed Martin	83	82⅞
Louisiana Pac	17⅜	18
Lubrizol	24⅛	24⅞
Lucent Tech	102⅞	104
Manpower Inc	23⅞	22⅞
Marriott Int A	27	27⅞
Marsh & McLen	59⅞	57⅞
Masco Corp	28	28⅞
May Dept St	58½	58⅜
Maytag Corp	60⅞	60⅜
McDonalds	76⅞	77⅛
McGraw Hill	99⅞	99⅞
Mead Corp	29⅛	29⅜
MediaOne Group	42⅞	42⅜
Medtrust Corp	14⅛	14
Medtronic	74⅞	75⅛
Mellon Bk	68⅜	67⅜
Merck Inc	144⅜	144⅞
Merrill Lynch	69⅞	71
Microsoft	139⅜	140⅞
Minnesota Mine	76⅜	76⅛
Mirage Resorts	13⅞	13⅞
Mobil Corp	86⅞	86⅞
Monsanto	43⅛	43⅞
Morgan (JP)	102⅞	103⅛
Motorola Inc	60⅞	60⅞
Mylan Labs	25⅛	27⅛
Natl Semi	14⅛	14⅞
Natl Service Ind	34⅞	34⅛
Navistar Int	28⅛	28⅛
NY Times A	34⅛	33⅞
Newmont Mng	19⅜	17⅛
Nike B	38	38⅞
Nordstrom	33⅛	34
Norfolk Sthrn	30⅞	30⅛
Nthn States Pwr	28⅛	28⅛
Occidental Pet	17⅞	17⅞
Office Depot	33⅛	33
Oracle	38⅞	39⅞
Oryx Energy Co	13	13
Owens Corning	38⅞	38⅞
PPG Industries	58⅜	56⅞
[illegible]	49⅛	49⅞
PNC Bank	52⅛	52⅜
PP&L Res	28⅛	28⅞
PacifiCorp	21⅞	21⅛
PaineWebber	37⅞	38⅛
Pall Corp	24⅞	24
Parker Hannifin	31⅞	30⅛
Peco Energy	42	42⅞
Penney (JC)	50⅞	49⅞
Pennzoil	31	33⅛
Pepsico	39⅛	39⅜
Pfizer	115¼	115⅞
Pharm & Upjhn	54⅛	54
Phelps Dodge	50⅞	50⅛
Philip Morris	52⅜	52⅞
Phillips Pet	42	41⅞
Pitney Bowes	63⅞	64⅛
Polaroid	18⅜	18⅞
Procter & Gmbl	88⅛	87
Providian	68⅜	68⅛
Pub Serv E & G	39⅞	40
Quaker Oats	58⅜	58⅞
Ralston Purina	30⅛	31
Raychem Corp	31⅛	31⅛
Raytheon B	50⅞	50⅜
Reebok Intl	14⅞	14⅛
Reliastar Fin	43⅜	44⅛
Reynolds Metals	50⅛	50⅜
Rockwell Intl	46⅛	47⅞
Rohm & Haas	29	29⅜
Royal Dutch	48⅞	48⅞
Rubbermaid	29⅞	29⅞
SBC Comms	52⅛	52⅛
Safeco Corp	41	41⅞
St Paul Cos	35⅞	35⅞
Sara Lee Corp	27⅛	55⅞
Schering Plough	52	52⅜
Schlumberger	45⅞	46⅞
Seagram	36⅞	36⅛
Sears Roebuck	41⅞	41⅛
Shell Trans	37⅞	37⅞
Sherwin Wllms	28⅜	28⅛
Silicon Graphics	12⅞	13
Snap-On-Tools	34⅞	34⅞
Southern Co	29⅞	29⅞
Southtrust	35⅜	35⅛
Stanley Works	27⅛	27⅞
Starwood H & R	23	22⅛
State Str Corp	70⅞	71⅞
Sunoco	32	32
Sun Microsys	82⅜	86⅛
Suntrust	74⅞	73⅞
Supervalu	28½	28
Synovus Fin	23⅞	23⅞
Sysco Corp	27⅛	27⅞
TRW Inc	55⅛	55⅞
TIG Hldgs	15⅛	16⅛
Tandy Corp	41⅞	42⅛
Temple Inland	54⅞	54⅞
Tenet Healthcare	25⅞	26⅛
Tenneco	33	33⅞
Texaco	51⅞	51⅜
Texas Inst	86	85⅞
Texas Utilities	47⅛	47⅞
Textron	69½	69⅜
Thermo Elect	16⅜	16⅜
Time Warner	57⅞	58⅛
Times-Mirror A	55⅞	54⅛
Timken	18⅛	18⅜
Torchmark	34⅞	35⅛
Toys R Us	16⅞	16⅜
Transamerica	109⅜	110⅜
[illegible]	79⅞	75⅜
Tribune	65⅞	64⅜
Tyco Intl	70⅞	71⅛
UST Inc	34⅞	34⅞
US Bancorp	35⅞	35⅞
UAL	59⅞	61⅛
Unicom	20⅜	21
US Inds	17⅛	17⅜
US West	63⅛	63⅞
USAirways Group	49⅜	50⅜
USX Marathon	27⅞	27⅞
Unicom	30⅞	30⅜
Unilever NV	82⅞	81⅞
Union Camp	64⅛	64
Union Carbide	40⅛	40⅞
Union Pacific	43⅜	43⅛
Unisys Corp	33⅜	34
United Tech	108⅞	109⅞
Unocal Corp	30⅛	30⅜
VF Corp	44⅞	46⅞
Venator Group	6⅞	7
Walgreen	57⅞	57⅛
Wal-Mart Stores	78⅞	78⅜
Warner-Lambert	71⅜	73⅞
Wells Fargo	37⅛	38⅛
Weyerhaeuser	49⅞	49⅞
Whirlpool	52⅞	52⅞
Williams	29⅛	29⅞
Winn Dixie	41⅞	41⅞
Witco Corp	14⅞	15⅛
Wrigley (Wm) Jr	88	88⅞
Xerox	109⅜	110⅞
Xilinx Inc	60	61
Yahoo	242⅛	247⅞

Absorbing currency shocks after E-day

The burning question for British business when the euro is born in nine days' time is how sterling will fare outside the euro zone. Firms will want to know whether the pound is likely to be stronger or weaker and, crucially for planning, whether it will be more volatile after E-day.

Such imponderables, if readily answered, would make a millionairess of this columnist. The best guess in the City, according to a Reuters poll of expectations, is that the pound will weaken from its current rate against the mark of DM2.80 to about DM2.60 at the end of 1999. This view is based largely on a cyclical view with Europe in the early stages of recovery and Britain going into recession.

However, a good case can be made for sterling moving very little from current levels. It seems perfectly plausible, as the International Monetary Fund pointed out this week, that, courtesy of deep cuts in interest rates from an (admirably) activist Monetary Policy Committee, Britain's slowdown could be short-lived, with recovery beginning in the second half of next year.

On the other hand, the European recovery is already faltering as central banks acknowledged when they cut euro zone interest rates earlier this month. The British and European economies may be more in tune than conventional wisdom suggests.

Relative interest rates may converge. UK base rates of 6.25 per cent currently compare with euro rates of 3 per cent. However, British interest rates could fall further than those across the Channel, partly by virtue of the fact that European rates have less far to fall, partly because the European Central Bank may be less prone to easy money than the MPC. Gerard Lyons, of DKB International, believes that by mid-1999 UK rates may have fallen to 5 per cent and euro rates to 2.5 per cent. However, by 2000, he is looking for British rates of 3.5 per cent and euro rates of 1.5 per cent.

With interest rates converging, there is far less reason for portfolio favouritism, another argument for the relative stability of the pound against the euro.

The one wild card is the dollar. Mr Lyons's vision of very low interest rates in both Britain and Europe depends on the assumption that, at some stage next year, the American economy will run out of steam (as it must to correct the growing imbalance in the US current account). Then, he argues, the world will have lost its engine for growth and interest rates worldwide will have to plunge in order to counteract recession. In this scenario, it is likely that the dollar will fall against the euro and, given that the pound has traditionally tracked the US currency more



closely than the mark and its satellites, sterling could decline too.

The push-me, pull-you position of the pound between the euro and dollar monoliths, particularly given speculation that the dollar and the euro will trade in a much more volatile way against each other than ever the dollar did against the mark in the past, is a real concern for British business.

However, not all the arguments for greater volatility between the dollar and euro zones stack up. One argument is that the euro could be forced dramatically higher as investors pour money into the euro, out of the dollar. Fred Bergsten, director of the Institute for International Economics in Washington, estimates that such portfolio diversification could be worth $500 billion to $1 trillion.

Robert McCauley, in his Bank for International Settlements paper *The Euro and the Dollar*, rejects this argument. He argues that, as euro capital markets become broader and more liquid, there will be greater demand to borrow in euros as well as to invest in euros. "Portfolio flows between the euro and the dollar might exert a powerful force but they are unlikely to run in a single direction enough to predominate in setting the dollar/euro rate," he says.

Mr McCauley also suggests policy reasons that support the view that the dollar will be less volatile against the euro than it has been against the mark. First, a common European interest rate policy, simply because it does not respond to events in a single country (such as Germany post-unification), is likely to swing much less.

Secondly, although the ECB is charged solely with maintaining price stability, its constituent national members are keen on exchange-rate stability too. The Franco/German idea of target zones between the dollar and the euro has not proved popular but the fact that it has been floated is indicative that there is widespread concern about volatility and suggestive of pressure on the ECB to counter that threat.

So where does this leave sterling? Much of the above ought to be reassuring to business. On a cyclical analysis, on the subject of portfolio diversification and on the relationship between the dollar and the euro, fears of instability appear exaggerated.

Even if the euro and the dollar turn out to be very unstable against each other, this is no argument for Britain, defensively, to enter the single currency. Much was made of the recent threat by George Soros to speculate against the pound if it remains outside the euro. Less notice was taken of his warning that it would be dangerous for the pound to join because it trades much more closely to the dollar than the euro.

Inside the euro, appreciation against the dollar would be very damaging to Britain's considerable trading interests outside Europe. Outside, at least the pound will split the difference if there are sharp movements between the opposing blocs. An independent, free-floating currency is a brilliant economic shock absorber and, however heavy the weather, Britain can mobilise it whenever it likes.

Why well-bred bear wishes his festive invitations came earlier

Sigrid Aufterbeck on Steiff's Teddies — the toy that collectors reckon is too good for children

For nearly 100 years, Steiff, the toymaker, has been producing the original "Teddy" bear at its factory in Bavaria. But it has never had a Christmas like this. The company has completely sold out of all its Christmas products for the third time running. The shelves in the 95-year-old traditional plant are emptied of all 5,000 Christmas Teddies — which sell at DM129 (£46) each — and 3,000 Nicolaus Teddies, which cost DM299. This adds up to sales of just over DM1.5 million. And the first Nicolaus of the production line this year has just been auctioned for charity, reaching a price of DM3,200.

This is the good news about Christmas production. The bad news is that Steiff could have sold a lot more, if only it could have prepared early enough. But its run-up to Christmas is becoming shorter every year.

"We could not produce large enough numbers of our Nicolaus bear to supply the world markets", Gabriele Schöning, spokeswoman for Steiff says. "Thus we decided to sell the 3,000 Nicolaus bears in Germany only."

The reason for ever-tighter Christmas production is the changing behaviour of Steiff's customers, which causes problems for all producers of seasonal products. "Our industry was accustomed to receive Christmas orders by spring, allowing us to plan and organise production well ahead," Schöning said. "But during the past few years, our customers have developed a policy of ordering as late as possible, and we now receive Christmas orders as late as August."

That means that the 1,000 employees, who carry out, by hand, an average of 30 procedures on each bear, have little to do during the first half of the year, but by the end of the year, even overtime shifts cannot help to produce enough. Steiff has even had to send staff home early in the spring, only to demand overtime in the autumn. "But we need to start planning our collection one-and-a-half years ahead and produce the first year 2000 series by February," Schöning says.

Not making the most of Christmas is particularly annoying, given that Christmas sales are crucial for Steiff, making up more than 40 per cent of its DM104 million turnover. In other companies, the lateness of orders would most certainly be met by measures to cut production time by eliminating some of the more intricate steps in the production process.

However, that will not do for Steiff. The bears owe their cult status to a production process that retains features of the old, traditional way. On average, each animal consists of 35 parts, assembled in 30 hand-performed working steps. Some of the fluffy fur is hand cut, avoiding damaging the hair by machine-cutting. Traditional wood wool, which Steiff still uses for some animals, is stuffed by hand. Many seams are stitched by hand, as are the bear's eyes, for which a long needle is pushed right through the bear's head to secure them to the back of the head so that they cannot be pulled off and swallowed by children. Each animal receives an individual make-up, which is hand-sprayed by airbrush painters, allowing an individual facial expression. When all these steps have been carried out and checked, the toys receive the famous metal "Steiff" button in the left ear.

These processes guarantee the animals' quality and thus Steiff's success, and reducing the manual input would be a short-term measure, risking Steiff's standing as the oldest and the original Teddy bear company. Its story goes back to 1880, when Margarete Steiff, a young, wheelchair-bound knitter created a little felt elephant. The 33-year-old, who could not use her legs and arms fully since having polio as a child, had opened a felt workshop in the small Bavarian town of Giengen-upon-Brenz, and became the first person in the town to own a mechanical sewing machine. Though the little elephant's original purpose was to keep sewing needles, Margarete Steiff noticed that it attracted the attention of children and she began to make more little elephants. Just six years later, Margarete had produced 5,170 of them, with her brother organising the sales. This was the time when the family-run business began.



A Christmas Teddy by Steiff, whose handmade style fuels a demand that is hard to meet

Though Margarete never married and had no children, she drew her brother's five sons into the business. It was her nephew, Richard, who created Steiff's most popular product, the "Teddy" bear, in 1902. However, the little toy with shaggy fur and a loveable face was a total failure when presented at the Leipzig spring fair in 1903. Nobody, it seemed, was interested.

However, the last day of the fair changed things, when an American salesman fell in love with this "PB55" series called "Bär-le" and ordered 3,000 — an incredible number at that time. From here, the bear made its way into the White House, where Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt launched his election campaign to promote himself as an animal-lover who had refused to kill a bear cub when out hunting. C.K. Berryman, a newspaper cartoonist, started to add a Teddy bear to any Roosevelt caricature. This was the best advertisement for Steiff's "Teddy's Baer", which sold 12,000 in the same year.

By 1904, the Teddy bear had achieved cult status in Europe and the US and found so many imitators that Steiff had to think about something to distinguish the original from the fakes. A metal button in the left ear made the name "Steiff — button in the ear" one of the oldest registered trade marks worldwide. When Margarete's five nephews officially joined the family business as partners in 1907, the company produced 974,000 Teddy bears a year, and an increasing number of other animals.

Steiff never ceased to be popular, but the past 15 years have seen a remarkable renaissance of the old and traditional Teddies, which finds expression in Steiff issuing replicas of earlier models. This year, it has issued a limited edition of the original "Teddy" bear on the occasion of the 140th anniversary of the birth of Theodore Roosevelt.

With this replica, Steiff can to some extent share in the prices that its old models now make in the collectors' market. Last year saw a 1920 Teddy sold for DM89,200, and a Teddy from 1925 reach DM189,550. The record belongs to a Teddy-Girl from 1905 that made £110,000 (DM270,000) at Christie's four years ago, bought by a businessman in Steiff-loving Japan.

The fact that Steiff's Teddies get more valuable with the years is now about to change their customers. Unlike in Steiff's old markets, such as Germany, Austria, Switzerland and France, where Steiff pets are still bought mainly for children's pleasure, British and US customers more frequently buy Steiff as collectors. And these markets are the ones where Steiff sees the biggest sales increases, making up to 30 per cent of sales. Sales in Asia have boomed since 1995. Consequently, Bernhard Rösner, Steiff's chief executive, targets grown-ups not only as buyers for their children, but also as collectors.

Londoners have always been a big market for Steiff. Since 1895, Harrods has each year received a new model of a Harrods edition of a "musical collection", featuring a poet bear with a feather this year. Hamleys, Steiff's other London partner, presents a "Dominic" bear this year, a black mohair bear in a limited edition of 1,500.

But, alas, no Nicolaus bears. Not unless the retailers can be persuaded to plan a little bit further in advance.

The €uro and me

A mission to explain the new currency

In the second of our series on the run-up to EMU, **Jason Nissé** talks to an ambassador for the euro

When James Ashe-Taylor joined the European competition team at the law firm of Wilde Sapte, he never dreamt he would end up addressing a seminar in Beijing explaining economic and monetary union to Chinese business leaders. However, by a strange quirk of fate, Mr Ashe-Taylor has become an ambassador of the single currency.

It all started three years ago. Mr Ashe-Taylor had just been posted to the Brussels office of the City solicitors when he was asked to make a speech at a conference on European law. Looking at the programme, he realised that one of the issues to be addressed was monetary union. "I knew nothing about the issue so I decided to mug up," he remembers. "It went well and people started seeing me as an expert in the issue."

Soon he was advising clients not only on the legal aspects of monetary union but also strategic, business and even political issues. Most large City law firms have a healthy competition practice, and most have a Brussels office. But few find themselves acting as consultants to their clients, a situation that partners at Wilde Sapte might find amusing, given the breakdown of merger talks with Arthur Andersen earlier this year.

Mr Ashe-Taylor finds his role both strange and interesting, though it means that he has had to keep well up with the fast-moving nature of European politics. "It is unusual for British businesses to turn to their lawyers for that sort of advice, they usually turn to their accountants or merchant bankers," says Mr Ashe-Taylor. "In the US this tends to happen, so I hope this might be the start of a trend."

His role as roving euro-expert has led to a large amount of travelling. He is one of Eurostar's best customers and has also been invited to speak on euro issues in New York, San Francisco, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Beijing. Out of all these places, he received the best response in the Chinese capital. "Some of the people there were incredibly well informed," he recalls.

Many of the questions he has been asked have fallen well outside his normal remit, ranging from investment strategy to whether the euro would, like the dollar, be adopted as a reserve currency. Mr Ashe-Taylor found that in the Far East the hunger for information about the new single currency far outstripped the amount of information people had received from official sources, such as the embassies of the 11 countries whose currencies are to be integrated.

Having lived in Brussels for the past three years, he has developed a different perspective on the euro debate raging in the UK. "It's like being in the Hubble telescope, looking back to earth," says Mr Ashe-Taylor. "I found that a lot of the reporting of euro issues in the UK distorted what was going on in Brussels. I have had to spend a lot of time correcting the vision of people in the UK."

Once the euro has become a fact, Mr Ashe-Taylor will have to go back to being a plain old competition lawyer. Though he may have some regrets about losing his ambassadorial brief, sticking to the knitting should be quite lucrative. "It has been good raising the firm's profile and putting us at the centre of a current event, but it has not generated a large amount of extra chargeable hours," he says.

Hands on

CRESTCO, the body responsible for the settlement of UK stocks, is moving home next May, swapping its offices overlooking St Katharine's Dock and a short step from *The Times* for larger premises near Mansion House. About which I hear a grisly tale.

Iain Saville, choral-singing chief executive, says the company has already run out of space, and this can only get worse when it assumes responsibility for gilts and the money markets next year.

Security will be stepped up, but instead of swipe cards there will be electronic palm-readers. These are increasingly common, but Crest employees will discover that their machines have an added modification because of the sensitivity of their work and the extremes to which organised crime will go. They will notice upright pins between the fingers on the plate.

These are to ensure that the palm belongs to a living, breathing employee. As opposed to his or her severed hand.

PETER MANDELSON has given an exclusive interview to DTI News, a "must read" publication in his department. I wonder whether he will now be regretting the headline: "I want to live dangerously."



"I love it when you bring your work home with you"

On the line

A BIZARRE and seemingly profitless scam is circling the electronic ether concerning mobile phones. Companies providing these, such as Cellnet, are being contacted by concerned customers who have been warned by e-mail to beware fake "technicians" ringing them on their mobiles.

These then ask them to press "nine, zero, hash" on their phones as part of a test, claims the e-mail. By doing this you are giving the "technician" access to your phone line and allowing him to make long distance calls at your expense, it explains, ending with a request to pass the warning on to other mobile phone users.

The message probably emanates from the US and has been circulating for eight months. There is not a word of truth in it, say the phone companies. There are no such "technicians", and no such calls are being made, the "nine, zero, hash" scheme would not work anyway.

One has to wonder just who would dream up such a pointless irritation. We are all part of a global electronic village — complete with a plentiful supply of electronic village idiots.



Grim tale

A SAD seasonal story about Christopher Harrison, who, with Stephen Hinchliffe, was behind the Facia, the collapsed retailer. Hinchliffe was arrested earlier this month and charged with conspiracy to defraud and corruption but has been released on bail to enjoy Christmas with his family.

Harrison has not been so lucky. He was arrested in Germany in July and is still in jail although, as yet, not formally charged with anything. The Germans have set his bail at an astronomical DM 10 million (about £3.6 million). The Kaiserslautern prosecutors' office says Harrison will be charged on January 17. Meanwhile he stays in the slammer.

I am told the Christmas meal in Germany is goose, potato balls and red cabbage. Our thoughts are with him.

A MATE rings with a warning. A well-known restaurant popular with City diners, which I dare not name, has decided to take advantage of the season of goodwill and that extra bottle with lunch.

A colleague's bill was shamelessly padded, with the usual percentage added as a mandatory tip plus another 10 per cent on top. Challenged, the waiter said this was "in case you wanted to give a tip and hadn't done so".

Taylor-made

IS MARTIN TAYLOR looking for a more glamorous job after his surprise departure from Barclays? Yesterday lunchtime he was spotted at Antonio Carluccio's achingly trendy Covent Garden restaurant, recently the venue of an embarrassing encounter between Tony Blair and a mob of amorous female diners.

Taylor looked a bit gray and inconspicuous by comparison with all the media types there, I am told. He was with John Makinson, finance director of Pearson, headed by the charming Marjorie Scardino.

I am tempted to start a few rumours here about whether Scardino should start worrying about a replacement, but the explanation is more mundane. Both Taylor and Makinson are former editors of the Lex column in the *Financial Times*, so they were probably just discussing p/e multiples. Still, I wonder who paid?

MARTIN WALLER



Martin Taylor: enjoying lunch in Covent Garden

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FIRST Option Bonds*	£20,000+	6.50%	5.50%
Effective date 23 December 1998	under £20,000	6.25%	5.25%
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Income Bonds	£25,000+	6.75%†	6.00%
Effective date 3 February 1999	under £25,000	6.50%†	5.75%
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Effective date 3 February 1999			

*Existing customers' holdings are not affected by this change
† Rates from 2 January 1999

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Shares fall in thin trading

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
646	385	Allied Domecq†	503	+5½	4.6	14.5
412½	201½	Bynes (HP)	339	...	5.8	14.9
42½	7	Burn Stewart	18½	+½		
795	432	Diageo	693	-1½	2.9	21.0
980	585	Glenmorangie A†	697½	...	2.6	18.7
325	226	Highland Distil†	263½	+3	4.4	12.8
244	115	Matthew Clark	242	...	0.7	8.2
59½	18½	Macdon W	31	...		
2021½	725	SA Breweries†	1594½	...	3.8	13.2

BANKS

BREWERIES, PUBS & REST

BUILDING MATERIALS

CHEMICALS

CONSTRUCTION

DISTRIBUTORS

DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS

ELECTRICITY

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
880	318	Br Energy†	674	-11½	2.8	31.9
528	301	National Grid†	487½	-3½	3.2	22.9
700	470	National Power†	520½	...	8.2	11.5
801	701	PowerGen	708	-3	4.7	12.0
711	476	Scottish Power†	631	-7	4.2	15.2
731	502½	Scot & Sthn Eng	650	-10	4.0	15.5
748	457	Southern Elec	576½	...	4.4	17.3
725	522	Yorkshire	725	+1	3.9	14.5

ELECTRONIC & ELECT

ENGINEERING

ENGINEERING, VEHICLES

FOOD MANUFACTURERS

HEALTHCARE

HOUSEHOLD GDS & TEXT

INSURANCE

INVESTMENT TRUSTS

LEISURE & HOTELS

MEDIA

MINING

OIL & GAS

OTHER FINANCIAL

PHARMACEUTICALS

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
150	20	Brit Biotech	33	+1		
300	163	Cantab Pharms	202½			
462½	197½	Celltech	402½			
356½	195	Chiroscience	245	+15		

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NLA

PRINTING & PAPER

PROPERTY

RETAILERS, FOOD

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
227½	140½	ASDA Group	157½	-1½	2.9	15.0
626	145	Alldays	145	-2½	16.5	3.9
81	55½	Budgens	63½	+2½	3.2	11.6
81½	53½	Dairy Farm Ind	65½	+1½	5.5	12.1
212½	157	Fairepak	192½	+1	3.9	12.6
184	93	Fyffes	124		2.1	14.5
2787½	1995	Greggs	2412½		2.0	19.2
351	119	Iceland Group	240	+2½	2.8	13.8
315	227½	Morrison (W)	280	-½	1.0	21.6
69	32	Park Group	35		10.2	15.2
407½	259	Safeway†	285½	+3½	6.2	13.3
589½	370	Sainsbury J†	479	+9½	3.7	17.6
484	207½	Somerfield	380½	-2	3.7	12.1
338	184½	T & S Stores	274		4.0	14.2
208	150	Tesco▼	169	-½	2.9	19.2
293½	157½	Thorntons	224½	-8	3.6	16.6

RETAILERS, GENERAL

SUPPORT SERVICES

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
330	411½	BT	892½	-15½	2.6	26.3
863	153½	COLT Telecom	956½	+37½		
863	467½	Cable Wireless	735½	-17½	1.9	26.2
716½	384½	Cable&Wire Comm	542	-13		53.6
1367½	252½	Energis	1342½	-12½		
397½	95	Euro Telecom†	119	-2½	3.2	16.0
523½	110½	Fleomet	325	-1½		
820	239½	Orange	695	-6		
573	286½	Securicor	495½		8.4	50.1
209½	69½	TeleWest	163½	+3½		
998	298	Vodafone†	971½	-8½	0.8	60.0

TRANSPORT

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
440	210	Air London	260		3.8	11.3
357	179	All Nippon Air	198½	-5½		
518	330½	Arriva	377½	-9½	4.5	10.7
388	241½	Assoc Br Ports	276	...	4.3	13.6
372	150	Autologic	191½		4.9	8.7
393½	166½	Avis Europe	237	+3½	1.7	20.7
731½	402½	BAA†	686	+11	2.6	18.9
721	303½	Br Airways†	379	-12	5.3	8.5
130½	65½	Clarkson (H)	71½		6.5	10.1
204½	135½	Clydeport	196½		3.7	10.5
332½	158½	Dart	172		2.5	15.0
83½	43½	Eurotunnel Uts	71			
504½	221½	FirstGroup	397½		2.2	22.3
140	56	Fisher (James)	76½		5.6	6.1
692	489	Forth Ports	551½	-26	3.4	13.1
925	350	Frontline	400			14.3
815	510	Go-Ahead	780	-2	1.6	17.9
601½	229	Goode Durrant	276½	-1	5.3	8.0
566	301	Heyman Gp▼	557½	-5	0.4	39.2
1735	700	Inch Cape	720		0.6	15.4
96½	51½	Jacobs	52	-6½	5.5	12.1
642½	405	Mersey Docks	485	+10½	3.9	17.4
387	170½	Metroline	357½	-5	3.5	
303	90½	NFC	115½		4.4	10.4
1122	676	Nat Express	1102½		1.6	21.8
821½	475	Ocean Group	757½	+18½	2.3	21.9
121½	82½	Ocean Wilson	85		6.5	5.4
1012	485	P & O Dfd†	709½	+10	5.0	15.5
132	107½	P & O 5.5%	125		5.5	
515	265	Prism Rail	365	+2½	6.3	11.1
1766	571½	Railtrack	1565	+26	1.8	20.9
130	76½	Salvesen (C)	92½	-1	7.4	9.7
49	27	Seacon	27		5.6	19.8
296½	145	Seacontainer Ship	160	-4	6.2	5.1
311½	102	Servicair	145	+7½	4.6	10.3
295½	153	Stagecoach	234½	-1	1.4	20.7
828	297½	Tibbet & Britn	372½	-10	6.3	9.9
330½	193½	TDG	236½		5.4	16.0
116½	66½	Ugland	72	+4	8.7	4.9
72½	7½	Utd Carriers	22½	+2½	10.0	

WATER

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
987½	780	Anglian Water	832	-5	6.0	9.8
335	273	East Surrey†	279	+2½	5.6	5.6
1053½	740½	Hyder†	750	+7	6.6	7.1
129½	115½	Hyder Cm Pf	123½	...	8.0	...
775	640	Mid Kent Hldgs†	645		6.1	7.6
1170	864½	Pennon†	1169	-1	4.2	14.5
1175	665	Severn Trent†	1036	-4	4.0	11.1
4025	3265	South Staffs†	3450	-95	3.9	12.7
1230	811	Thames	1166	-13	4.3	11.9
978	658	Utd Utilities†	838	-6	5.0	11.5
580	436½	Yorkshire	566	-5½	4.4	11.3

ALTERNATIVE INV MARKET

GILTS

SHORTS (under 5 years)

High	Low	Stock	Price £	+/-	Int yld %	Gro red yld
100.02	100.00	Treas 7¼% 1998	100.0090		7.25	7.65
102.53	100.13	Treas 9¾% 1999	100.1937	-0.0040	9.48	6.23
108.31	101.62	Exch 12¼% 1999	101.6189	-0.0044	12.06	5.70
104.98	101.95	Treas 10½% 1999	101.9494	+0.0042	10.30	5.50
100.32	98.64	Treas 6% 1999	100.2989	+0.0003	5.98	5.48
105.45	103.82	Conv 10¼% 1999	104.3902	+0.0021	9.83	5.36
105.02	102.86	Conv 9% 2000	104.1785	+0.0181	8.64	5.33
105.79	102.22	Treas 8% 2000	105.4528	+0.0171	7.59	5.03
103.94	101.51	Treas 9½% 2000	103.3225	+0.0151	8.23	5.34
114.83	110.58	Treas 13% 2000	111.4569	+0.0088	11.66	5.23
110.85	107.11	Treas 10% 2001	109.9404	+0.0215	9.10	5.10
106.10	100.71	Treas 7% 2001	105.7083	+0.0077	6.62	4.84

MEDIUMS (5 to 15 years)

High	Low	Stock	Price £	+/-	Int yld %	Gro red yld
107.62	101.42	Treas 7% 2002	107.2003	+0.0041	6.53	4.71
119.95	111.19	Treas 9¾% 2002	116.4355	-0.0055	8.37	4.82
113.99	105.58	Treas 8% 2003	113.5863	-0.0360	7.04	4.59
122.83	115.44	Treas 10% 2003	122.3440	-0.0675	8.17	4.64
114.41	110.80	Treas 11½% 2001-04	113.1642	+0.0066	10.16	5.17
98.98	88.17	Fund 3½% 1999-04	98.3417	-0.0033	3.56	3.75
125.19	116.53	Conv 9½% 2004	124.6289	-0.0397	7.62	4.63
112.81	101.84	Treas 6¾% 2004	111.5764	-0.1096	6.05	4.50
123.61	113.06	Treas 8½% 2005	123.1585	-0.1563	6.90	4.58
128.89	117.51	Conv 9½% 2005	128.2951	-0.1645	7.52	4.66
134.58	127.40	Treas 12½% 2003-05	134.2714	-0.0679	9.31	4.61
119.67	107.95	Treas 7½% 2006	119.1024	-0.2067	6.30	4.51
120.78	109.97	Treas 7¾% 2006	120.6172	-0.2732	6.46	4.63
111.23	104.38	Treas 8% 2002-06	110.7984	-0.0038	7.22	4.82
125.92	110.81	Treas 11¾% 2003-07	125.3645	-0.0055	9.37	4.82
127.88	114.98	Treas 8½% 2007	127.1331	-0.3371	6.69	4.63
120.71	105.88	Treas 7¼% 2007	119.8575	-0.3486	6.05	4.53
136.00	121.19	Treas 9% 2008	135.2730	-0.3993	6.65	4.51
130.71	118.88	Treas 8% 2009	129.9367	-0.4080	6.18	4.44
116.42	98.44	Treas 6¼% 2010	115.6625	-0.4301	5.40	4.54
142.63	124.09	Conv 9% 2011	141.7342	-0.5062	6.35	4.59
144.35	125.94	Treas 9% 2012	143.9466	-0.5580	6.25	4.62
109.95	93.28	Treas 5½% 2008-12	109.4107	-0.3085	5.03	4.32
131.17	112.61	Treas 7¾% 2012-15	130.0871	-0.5336	5.96	4.66

LONGS (over 15 years)

High	Low	Stock	Price £	+/-	Int yld %	Gro red yld
136.95	116.50	Treas 8% 2013	136.0174	-0.5722	5.88	4.61
141.66	118.46	Treas 8% 2015	140.6342	-0.6537	5.69	4.54
153.39	127.39	Treas 8¾% 2017	152.2351	-0.7415	5.75	4.57
150.44	121.52	Tr 8% 2021	149.1818	-0.8205	5.36	4.50

UNDATED

High	Low	Stock	Price £	+/-	Int yld %	Gro red yld
77.19	55.09	War Ln 3½%	76.0945	-0.7388	4.60	
53.84	38.48	Treas 2½%	53.0680	-0.3315	4.71	
84.39	61.15	Consols 4%	83.1733	-0.8767	4.81	...

INDEX-LINKED on projected inflation of: 5% 3%

High	Low	Stock	Price £	+/-	5%	3%
206.40	194.71	Treas IL 2½% 2001	205.9017	-0.0506	2.16	2.58
207.67	192.34	Treas IL 2% 2003?	207.5505	-0.0390	1.86	2.23
197.97	174.28	Treas IL 4⅝% 2004	197.7913	-0.0232	1.91	2.12
233.04	206.54	Treas IL 2% 2006	233.0132	-0.0261	1.82	1.97
214.47	187.06	Treas IL 2½% 2009	214.4723	+0.0495	1.89	2.02
227.43	195.58	Treas IL 2½% 2011	227.4287	-0.0450	1.96	2.05
191.18	162.40	Treas IL 2½% 2013	191.1793	+0.0066	1.97	2.06
210.82	175.38	Treas IL 2½% 2016	210.8179	+0.0047	1.97	2.05
209.61	170.21	Treas IL 2½% 2020	209.6052	+0.0061	1.98	2.06
181.51	142.88	Treas IL 2½% 2024	181.5143	-0.0005	1.95	2.01
179.72	140.65	Treas IL 4⅛% 2030	179.7211	+0.0184	1.92	1.98

Source: FT Information

A landlord's nightmare is the student who leaves with big debts — but there are precautions you can take

Low-rent students



Bad business: minimise the chance of getting bad student tenants by checking references thoroughly

A RECENT report in *The Times* highlighted the problems encountered by landlords, many of whom have since written to give warning about one type of tenant in particular — the student.

Student tenants can prove especially vexing for landlords. They may try to live in properties rent-free by paying a deposit and the first month's rent promptly but defaulting thereafter. Parents are not responsible, as the students are over 18.

The best advice is to minimise the chance of getting bad student tenants by checking references thoroughly. Garath Hardwick, the secretary of the Small Landlords Association, says tenants' credit ratings should be checked and inquiries made to ensure there are no County Court judgments against them. References must be followed up.

Malcolm Harrison of the Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA) says that references should not be taken over the phone. "Since the Housing Act of 1996, it has been illegal for false references to be given, but you should double-check a reference and get at least two references if possible."

One reform would be to follow the regulatory system used in Australia, where rental contracts are vetted by an independent board capable of stopping unscrupulous operators.

In the meantime, check if your agent is a member of ARLA (01923 896555), which insists its members perform routine checks. Speak to referees listed, and use the university itself as an extra check. But the best insurance of all is to get a sizeable deposit and three months' rent in advance.



"I am stuck with unpaid rent," says Sheila Niedbala

A LANDLADY'S EXPENSIVE LESSON

READER Shiela Niedbala, pictured above, from Mitcham, London, experienced many trials while renting her house in Leicester to students over seven years.

"I had no trouble until last year when three girls failed to pay their rent," she says.

"Two left owing five months' rent; one owed two months' rent. They left gas, electricity and water-rate bills all unpaid."

Mrs Niedbala says she wrote to and visited them repeatedly between January and June and they always had good excuses for not having paid. "They made promises of payments that did not materialise."

They left her flat in a filthy state. Eventually, Mrs Niedbala took out County Court summonses against the girls, which cost her £200, but two of them ignored the summonses.

"All three students will then have County Court judgments against them making them uncreditworthy," she says, "but they do not seem to mind.

"But it seems that I am stuck with all the rents unpaid and no hope of ever getting payment."

Why letting never paid

ONE FAMILY'S COSTLY MISTAKE

The sums were beguiling, *Brian McCulloch writes*. We could rent out our two-bedroom semi-detached house in Bournemouth to students through long established agents and pay the mortgage.

What is more there would even be a little profit at the end of the month, not a lot, but enough to put aside for the inevitable slates blown off the roof.

We knew what it was like to rent, having done so ourselves. Naively we believed most people respect the place in which they live.

When we thought of heading for the sun at the start of 1996, selling the house did not seem attractive. It had been bought with a 100 per cent mortgage for £62,000 in 1990. At the pit of the property market, which arrived in Bournemouth in 1994, we would have been lucky to get £52,000 for it. There was also the thought that if things did not work out it would be good to have the house to return to.

Once the decision was made things moved fast. We signed up with agents who took 12 per cent of the £600-a-month rent. The firm had rented us a house in the past and had seemed fair. Kitting out the property for three student bedrooms, a lounge and a kitchen was not too hard or expensive — we left most of our own goods in place.

The major cost involved buying a fireproof mattress, a gas cooker, a vacuum cleaner and getting a landlord's gas safety certificate.

The first tenants, and the only ones we met face-to-face, were four well-scrubbed young men.

They produced certificates from college confirming their enrolment and told us that they were working part time to pay their way. They seemed pleasant and straightforward and they were signed up.

Six weeks later they quit, abandoning the deposit in lieu of rent.

The house was so dirty that professional cleaners had to be hired to restore order. Even they were shocked by the state of the cooker. So much grease had become encrusted on it that it would not light.

After three weeks, the agency called to say that it had another three people who wanted to take the house for six months.

They seemed ideal tenants, paying the rent on time. But later neighbours told us they had done this by having up to 14 people stay in the house at a time.

At the end of their tenancy there was a six-week delay getting new tenants. By then we were a bit less enthusiastic about letting the house, especially as interest rates seemed to be going up every couple of months.

The next tenants convinced us we had to sell.

On paper they seemed reasonable, three friends who seemed able to make ends meet. They had scarcely been in the house before they contacted the agents to say that the heating was not working. When the plumber was called in, he found that they had not turned the radiator taps on.

Shortly after that the agency handyman was called because they found the lock on the bathroom stiff. All he had to do was oil it. There followed a request for a new carpet to replace jute flooring in one of the bedrooms.

Within days there had been a leak in the bathroom which required a second visit from the plumber.

It was around this time that the university student stopped paying the rent on time. The agents were on to him immediately but he explained that he was waiting for the following term's grant.

It was at this time that we sat down and did our sums. Far from covering the mortgage, renting the house had cost us £2,000 and seemed a lot more trouble than it was worth. We were having second thoughts.

Eventually there seemed to be a falling out among the three friends and they asked to be allowed to leave the tenancy early. We accepted this on condition that they left with the rent fully paid. In the end it had to be deducted from the deposit.

Eventually, we decided to sell up. Going back to the house was sad. We had been happy there and to see the house so grubby and worn was depressing.

One item in particular brought home to me how little the house and its contents had been respected by the tenants. The vacuum cleaner, bought new before we left, was a wreck — and it takes a lot to ruin a cleaner.

Universities can save on heartache

Universities that act as estate agents for property owners save work and worry for landlords and help students to find reasonably priced accommodation.

Properties away from London and the more prestigious university areas cost less to buy. Rents are not proportionately lower, however, so that a property in the North can produce a higher yield than one in the South, although its value may depreciate.

Michael James, a peripatetic worker, found that his job made pension saving difficult. Looking for extra income to supplement his retirement, he found on the Internet a selection of houses in Hull (with their floor plans) from £30,000. He took an overnight ferry from his workplace in Amsterdam and bought a £36,000 semi.

> Property in the North can produce a higher yield

The University of Hull Head Leasing Service (01482-341228) manages properties for landlords. It lets to about 250 students at rents of £25.50 per week for a small room, and up to £30.75 for a larger size. A leasing officer inspects the property, checks equipment and furnishing and places the number of students a property comfortably holds.

Mr James will let to four students at a weekly rental of £97, from which the leasing service deducts £125 a year. He is not bothered about any fall in the value of the property because his aim is retirement income and he feels it is a better purchase than an annuity which ceases on death.

Another university which manages properties is the University of Warwick (01203 523 523). It charges £20 for advertisements on its accommodation list or a management fee of 12 per cent with rent guaranteed and twice-yearly visits to the property. Liverpool University (0151-794 3296) has no property management service but displays a list of vacancies in the Student Homes building at 140 Mount Pleasant.

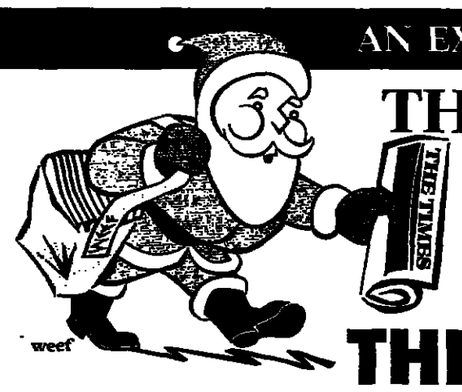
The University of Surrey (01483-300 800) with 2,600 students on its campus and needing external accommodation for more than 1,000, operates a different system. The accommodation office provides the owner with information on the furnishings and equipment required and advises on any maintenance needed.

The price for the gas safety certificate issued by the Council of Registered Gas Installers (Corgi), which is essential, is fairly standard but prices for the electrical certificate, which is also needed, are variable. A property is monitored at the beginning, during and at the end of the tenancy.

All upholstered furniture in rented properties including chairs, sofas, beds and headboards, must be fire-retardant to comply with current safety standards (BS 5872). There must be mains-linked smoke detectors with battery back-up installed on each floor and self-closing fire doors leading from the kitchen. Though these regulations might sound irksome, for anybody working abroad or who finds it difficult to keep their property constantly tenanted and in good order, letting to a university has much to recommend it.

JENNIE HAWTHORNE

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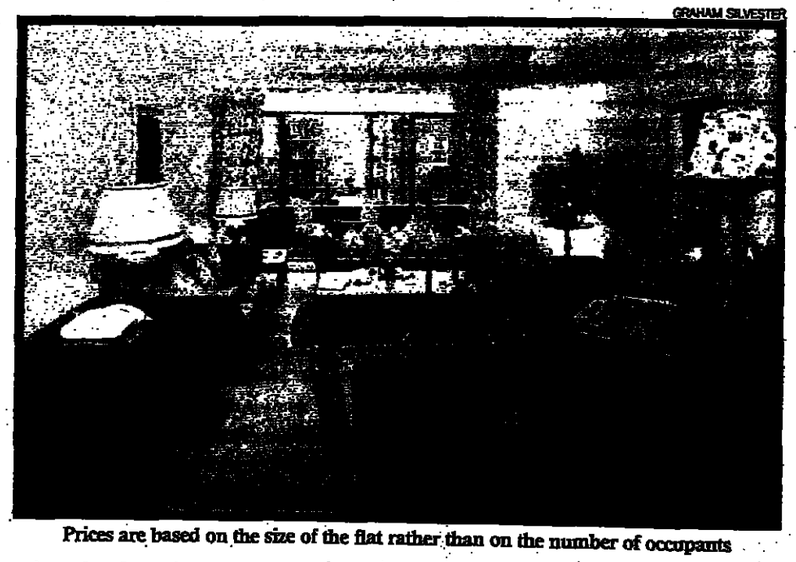
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CHANGING TIMES

Service with a smile

Gwenda Joyce-Brophy on the appeal of the serviced flat



GRAHAM SILVESTER

Prices are based on the size of the flat rather than on the number of occupants

Serviced flats have had a dated image ever since Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard were interrupted during their tryst in *Brief Encounter*. But a new breed of businessman is turning to flats with services provided either in-house or bought in.

When John McCardle, an economics consultant, and his wife, Maria, were between overseas contracts, they had to spend some time in London. "The start date for a new contract was several weeks away and we were unhappy at the prospect of living in a hotel room all that time," Mrs McCardle says. As an alternative, her husband's company found them a serviced flat.

"The market is booming," says Jane Renton, the general manager of Draycott Apartments in Chelsea. "Serviced flats appeal to those relocating to the UK or vice versa, people who want a base for theatre weekends or a family half-term break and business clients, who also use them for corporate entertaining."

The services range from the mundane but useful, such as arranging newspaper and milk deliveries, to maid and laundry service and babysitting. Some serviced flats even have solariums and saunas, or the option to use facilities at a health club. A key feature is the provision of a fully equipped kitchen, so that residents can cook "at home" if they choose.

High-tech services — such as cable and satellite television, a computer, fax and voicemail — are often available. But in essence, the concept of the serviced flat has changed little in more than 60 years.

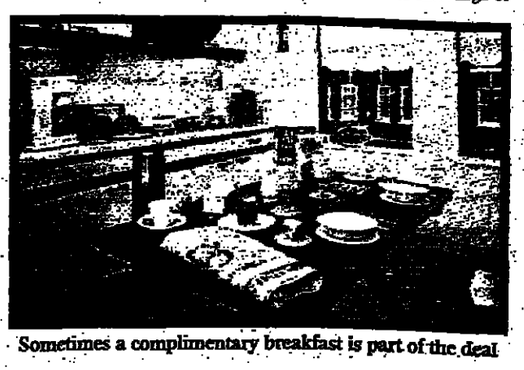
"Serviced flats took off in the 1930s," says Saskia Partington of the Geffrye Museum in East London. "Even then they had the latest appliances, such as refrigerators, at a time when fewer than 3 per cent of homes with electricity had a fridge." Aimed at a professional, upper middle-class market, the flats were designed with the social status of their clientele in mind, having a "tradesman's entrance" in the form of a separate service staircase.

The latter feature was particularly important for the McCardles. "We like to entertain and a kitchen meant that we could do so frequently, both formally and informally," Mrs McCardle says.

Ms Renton says time spent choosing the right type and size of flat for your needs is well spent. "Serviced apartments come as a wide range of room combinations. Two reception rooms can be useful — for example, where someone wants to have a quiet place to study." In some cases, a flat that matches the number of bedrooms and bathrooms is a necessity.

Robert Drew recently spent a month in a serviced flat with a colleague while working on a London-based project. "The company chose a two-bedroom apartment with one bathroom, but next time we would ask for two," he says. "We were working the same hours and hit a bottleneck every morning."

A laundry room is useful when a family is staying for more than just a few days, while business clients are likely to put greater value on a boardroom that can be used for small conferences or business meetings or a flat where secretarial services are available. Those likely to skip breakfast should obviously not opt for places where a complimentary breakfast is part of the deal.



Sometimes a complimentary breakfast is part of the deal

Serviced flats are not cheap, however. You might expect to pay £175 a night for a one-bedroom property. "But compared with the equivalent standard in de luxe hotels, serviced flats offer a lot more space for a lot less money," says Sarah Shelton, of Foxtons Serviced Apartments Worldwide.

Prices are based on the size of the flat rather than on the number of occupants. "When companies put six people in a three-bedroom apartment for the duration of a conference, it can be extremely cost-effective for them," Ms Shelton says. "And for those on a budget, if a pied-à-terre will suffice, you can obtain a perfectly good serviced studio flat, complete with maid service, for £70 a night in London."

It is important to check minimum-stay restrictions, which range from one night to as long as three months. The rates for a room decline with length of stay, so staying for a full week in a three-bedroom flat with two bathrooms that costs £330 per night might save you £30 on the total cost.

● *Draycott 0171-584 4659; Foxtons 0171-704 5040*

Law Report December 23 1998 Court of Appeal

Accepting 999 call might create duty to send ambulance

Kent v Griffiths and Others

Before Lord Justice Kennedy, Lord Justice Schiemann and Sir Patrick Russell

[Judgment December 11]

Although the ambulance service owed no duty to the public at large to respond to a telephone call for help, once a 999 call in a serious emergency had been accepted, it was arguable that the ambulance service did have an obligation to provide the service for a named individual at a specified address.

It was therefore not appropriate to strike out as disclosing no reasonable cause of action a claim in negligence for failure of an ambulance to arrive promptly.

The Court of Appeal so held, allowing the appeal of the plaintiff, Mrs Tracey Kent, suing by her sister and next friend, Ms Jennifer Doughty, against the order of Mr Justice Moses on September 10, 1998, inter alia, striking out those parts of the statement of claim alleging that the third defendant, the London Ambulance Service, was in breach of a duty of care to the plaintiff in failing to provide an ambulance promptly to convey the plaintiff to hospital.

A cross-appeal seeking to have a misrepresentation claim, based on an assertion that an ambulance was on its way, struck out was dismissed.

Mr Edward Faulks, QC and Miss E. A. Gumbel for the plaintiff; Miss Mary O'Rourke for the ambulance service.

LORD JUSTICE KENNEDY said that on an appeal against a strike-out application the facts had to be assumed to be those as set out in the pleadings.

In February 1991 the plaintiff was a married woman, aged 26 with one child, living in Orpington, Kent. She was also pregnant for the second time and asthmatic. On February 16 she was very wheezy so she telephoned her general practitioner, Dr Yvonne Griffiths, the first defendant, who arrived at about 4pm.

At 4.27pm Dr Griffiths telephoned the ambulance service dialling 999, and asked for an ambulance to be sent to the plaintiff's home at once as an emergency, to take the plaintiff to Queen Mary's Hospital.

The servant or agent of the ambulance service who received that call said to Dr Griffiths: "OK doctor, I'll get someone down there." The distance from the ambulance station to the plaintiff's home was about seven miles. The nationally recommended maximum standard time from the receipt of a call to arrival of an ambulance at the scene was 14 minutes.

At 4.39pm the plaintiff's husband telephoned the ambulance service again. He was told that they were on their way and would be another seven to eight minutes.

At 4.55pm Dr Griffiths telephoned the ambulance service yet again and was told: "The ambulance is on its way to you, it should be a couple of minutes."

In fact the ambulance arrived at 5.05pm, 38 minutes after the first call. Dr Griffiths then travelled with the plaintiff in the ambulance on the journey to the hospital, which took about six minutes. They arrived at about 5.15pm.

During that journey the plaintiff was given oxygen intermittently but on the way she suffered a respiratory arrest with tragic consequences, including serious memory impairment, change of personality and a miscarriage.

Legal proceedings

In February 1994 the plaintiff brought her action against, inter alia, the ambulance service. In substance the allegations against the ambulance service were: (i) failure to respond promptly to the calls and (ii) failure to give oxygen continuously on the way to hospital.

The ambulance service in its defence admitted a duty to provide ambulance services on request as soon as reasonably practicable but later applied for the plaintiff's action to be struck out as disclosing no reasonable cause of action and to amend its defence, to delete the admission that a duty existed and deny, as a matter of law, that the ambulance service owed any duty of care to the plaintiff to respond to the request for an ambulance, whether as an emergency or at all.

It also denied that the failure to respond promptly was actionable at the suit of the plaintiff. The trigger for that dramatic change was the Court of Appeal decision in *Capital and Counties plc v Hampshire County Council (The Times* March 20, 1997; [1997] QB 1004).

Mr Justice Nelson gave leave to amend the pleadings and was satisfied that there was no prejudice to the plaintiff from the delay which could not be compensated in costs.

Mr Justice Moses on September 9, 1998 regarded the plaintiff's claim of failure to respond promptly as unarguable, but the claim amended to include misrepresentation in response to the 4.39pm call and the claim of failure to give oxygen continuously in the ambulance as arguable.

The plaintiff challenged the decision on the first head of claim. The ambulance service submitted that the misrepresentation claim should have been struck out.

Existence of a duty: pre-*Capital and Counties*

The question of when a duty of care was owed by a body such as the ambulance service had been considered in a number of cases in recent years, but with one minor exception, the cases had not concerned ambulance services.

Miss O'Rourke relied on that as indicating that if the court should hold that a duty of care existed it would be breaking new ground.

However, as long ago as 1970, the House of Lords in *Dorset Yacht Co Ltd v Home Office* ([1970] AC 1004) recognised the possibility of public servants, in that case borstal officers, owing a duty of care to a limited class of members of the public whom the officers could foresee as being vulnerable if they were negligent in their duty to control and supervise the borstal inmates for whom they were responsible.

In *Caparo plc v Dickman* ([1990] 2 AC 605), a case concerned with economic loss due to negligent statement, Lord Bridge of Harwich pointed out that no single general principle provided a practical test which could be applied to every situation to determine whether a duty of care was owed, and if so what was its scope.

Lord Bridge set out a three-stage test of foreseeability of damage, a relationship between the parties of proximity or neighbourhood and whether the court considered it fair, just and reasonable that the law should impose a duty upon one party for the benefit of the other.

That three-stage test had been regarded as the starting point in many subsequent cases, including *Capital and Counties*.

Capital and Counties

In *Capital and Counties* the Court of Appeal heard four appeals, all of which concerned the duties allegedly owed by the fire service to individuals who claimed to have suffered economic loss as a result of what they said was negligence on the part of that emergency service.

The court described *Alexandrou v Oxford* ([1993] 4 All ER 328) as clear authority for the proposition that there was no sufficient proximity simply on the basis that an emergency call was sent to the police, even if there was a direct line from the premises to the police station.

Failure to respond promptly

In *Alexandrou* the Court of Appeal said that the linkage of the burglar alarm to the police station did not create a relationship between the plaintiff and the police which was different from that which the police would have with any 999 caller, and therefore there was no special relationship between the plaintiff and the police as was present in the *Dorset Yacht* case.

His Lordship had difficulty in finding why that followed. Could there not be a special relationship with all 999 callers whose calls were accepted?

Lord Justice Slade in *Alexandrou* emphasised the public policy aspect of the case, stating that it was unthinkable that the police should be exposed to potential actions for negligence at the suit of every disappointed or dissatisfied maker of a 999 call.

In *Swinney v Chief Constable of Northumbria Police* ([1997] QB 464) it was said that the police were in breach of a duty of care in relation to a document which identified an informer.

The loss alleged was not simply economic. Proximity was held to have been shown by the police assuming responsibility, and the informer relying on that assumption of responsibility, for preserving the confidentiality of the information which, if it fell into the wrong hands, was likely to expose the informer and his family to a special risk of criminal acts.

It was demonstrated that even in relation to police forces *Alexandrou* could be distinguished.

In *Capital and Counties*, Lord Justice Stuart-Smith had said (at p1030A): "In my judgment, the fire brigade are not under a common law duty to answer the call for help, and are not under a duty to take care to do so. If therefore, they fail to turn up, or fail to turn up in time, because they have carelessly misunderstood the message, got lost on the way or run into a tree, they are not liable."

Miss O'Rourke relied heavily on that passage, and pointed out that the court bracketed fire brigades with "other rescue services such as ambulance or coastal rescue". But there were difference which might be important.

First of all Parliament had imposed upon the secretary of state a duty to provide, throughout England and Wales, to such extent as he considered necessary to meet all necessary requirements "medical, dental, nursing and ambulance services" by section 3(1) of the National Health Services Act 1977.

Mr Faulks did not rely on the statutory obligation as giving rise to rights but relied on common law rights of patients to receive medical, dental and nursing services.

He submitted that, at least arguably, the same was true of an ambulance service once a call had been accepted. Up to that point the obligation of the authority was only to provide a service, an obligation which could not give rise to individual rights, other than perhaps by judicial review. But once a call was accepted the service providers had undertaken to provide the service for a named individual at a specified address and that, Mr Faulks submitted, gave the individual certain rights.

At that point the obligation ceased to be general and became focused on the individual who if not served was likely to suffer physical damage, not simply economic loss.

An analogy with the fire brigade ended because the obligation of the fire service to the public at large remained throughout an obligation to extinguish the fire, whatever the detriment might be to any particular individual.

His Lordship said that on the facts of the present case the first of the three criteria identified in *Caparo* was not in issue. Miss O'Rourke accepted that if in an emergency an ambulance was sent for and did not attend or took a long time to attend there was a foreseeable risk of physical harm. That put the case in a different category from economic loss against which it might be possible to insure.

As to the second essential, the four plaintiffs in *Capital and Counties* failed because they could not demonstrate a sufficiently proximate relationship between them and the fire services, but once a call for an ambulance was accepted it was arguable that the position was different.

On the question of whether it was fair, just and reasonable that the duty of care should be imposed, his Lordship acknowledged that the ambulance service operated in a difficult area with cash limits, competing claims on limited resources, difficulty in deciding between competing calls for assistance from different locations and the ever present problems of traffic hazards.

If it also had to answer legal claims it would be using valuable time and money which could be effectively used elsewhere. However, those arguments also applied to hospitals, doctors and many others, and an important consideration in relation to the ambulance service was demonstrated by the facts of this case.

That was that if the ambulance service undertook to attend the person who had been promised that assistance, those acting on his or her behalf normally abandoned the search of other possible means of transporting the patient to hospital in a situation in which other means of transport might be readily available.

If a duty of care existed allowance had to be made for those factors, but a court might well find not only sufficient proximity but also that it was just, fair and reasonable that a duty of care should be imposed.

The claim of misrepresentation was accepted to be arguable. The claim in relation to treatment in the ambulance should be resolved when the facts had been established, not at a preliminary stage.

Those claims should be argued at trial, not under cover of an application to strike out, as there was room for a serious argument about what the law was.

Lord Justice Schiemann delivered a concurring judgment and Sir Patrick Russell agreed.

Solicitors: T. G. Baynes & Sons, Bexleyheath; Capsticks.

Design right exists on improvement to pre-existing articles

Farmers Build Ltd v Carier Bulk Materials Handling Ltd and Others

Before Lord Justice Simon Brown, Lord Justice Mummery and Sir Christopher Slade

[Judgment December 3]

Design right, within the meaning of section 213 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, subsisted in a new functional article and its parts where they were so designed as to be better than the pre-existing types.

The Court of Appeal so held in a reserved judgment in allowing an appeal by the plaintiffs, Farmers Build Ltd, and dismissing a cross-appeal by the defendants, Carier Bulk Materials Handling Ltd, from a judgment of Mr Justice Rattee.

Section 213 of the 1988 Act provides:

"(1) Design right is a property right which subsists in accordance with this Part in an original design.

"(2) In this Part 'design' means the design of any aspect of the shape or configuration ... of the whole or part of an article...

"(4) A design is not 'original' for the purposes of this Part if it is commonplace in the design field in question at the time of its creation."

Mr Michael Silverman, QC and Miss Heather Lawrence for the plaintiffs; Mr Anthony Watson, QC and Miss Emma Himsworth for the defendants.

LORD JUSTICE MUMMERY said that the case was the first design right case under the 1988 Act to reach the Court of Appeal.

The case was about an agricultural rotary screen slurry separator which had been developed to meet the demands of modern methods of intensive farming.

The essential idea of the rotary screen separator was that the slurry was disposed of by being piped or fed into the top of a machine within which it was squeezed by rollers onto a perforated cylindrical drum. The liquid element was squeezed through the holes in the drum and collected in a hopper. The solid element was scraped off the drum. The separated constituent solid and liquid parts were separately recycled for use as fertilisers.

The claim was that design rights in a rotary screen slurry separator manufactured and marketed under the name Target by the plaintiffs had been infringed by the defendants, who manufactured and marketed a slurry separator under the name Rotoscreen.

Although the plaintiffs successfully resisted the attack by the defendants on the subsistence of design right in the shape and configuration of the whole and parts of the Target machine, the judge refused to grant any monetary relief for infringement on the ground of acquiescence.

The plaintiffs carried on the business of manufacturing and marketing separators from 1986 until 1993, when they became insolvent and went into a creditors' voluntary liquidation.

One type of slurry separator, the Gascoigne machine, was made by Gascoigne Gush and Dent (Agricultural) Ltd, whose business was taken over by a German company, Sudtech Umwelt-Anlagenbau GmbH, which manufactured a slurry separator under the name of Sudstall. From 1989 the plaintiffs sold Sudstall machines in the United Kingdom.

In 1991, as a result of difficulties with the Sudstall machine, it was agreed between the plaintiffs and the defendants that the defendants would produce a prototype slurry separator, in accordance with the plaintiffs' requirements, to be based on and to be an improvement on the designs of the Gascoigne and Sudstall machines.

The defendants would be licensees of the plaintiffs in relation to the newly designed slurry separator. The plaintiffs would have the intellectual property rights.

In August 1991 the new slurry separator, Target, was put into production, but the plaintiffs had financial problems leading to a breakdown of their relationship with the defendants.

On November 2, 1992 the defendants gave notice terminating their agreement with plaintiffs and the agreement was duly terminated.

The defendants felt free to make and sell slurry separators on their own account. A new company, Carier Pollution Control Ltd, was incorporated on December 23, 1992. It began selling a slurry separator called Rotoscreen in April 1993.

It looked different from the Target machine from the outside but the actual machinery inside the Rotoscreen was almost identical to the Target machine.

By April 1993 the plaintiffs knew that the defendants were attempting to sell slurry separators of a similar design under the name Rotoscreen on their own account but took no action.

The defendants first received a complaint about the sales of Rotoscreen from the plaintiffs in May 1994. The liquidator of the plaintiffs suggested that the defendants might be infringing the plaintiffs' rights. It was not until January 1996 that solicitors instructed by him sent a letter before action to the defendants. The writ was issued on February 1, 1996.

The judge concluded that design right subsisted both in the Target machine as a whole and in respect of a number of the composite components.

Although he made a declaration to that effect in favour of the plaintiffs, he refused any further relief by way of compensation either as damages or an account of profits.

He held that it was unconscionable to make the defendants disgorge the profit and so loose the benefit of the business they had built up in the reasonable expectation, encouraged by the plaintiffs, that they had abandoned any intention to pursue such a claim against them.

The issues arising on subsistence of design right fell into two main parts:

1 Were the aspects of shape and configuration of articles in which the plaintiffs claimed design right "designs" within the meaning of section 213(2)?

2 If those aspects were designs were they "original" designs?

As to the second point, that could be sub-divided into two questions.

(a) Were the designs "original" but for the provisions on "commonplace" designs in section 213(4)?

(b) If they were original in that sense were they "commonplace" in the design field in question at the time of creation?

The definition of "design" in section 213(2) was wide enough to include the shape or configuration of the individual parts of the Target machine and of the Target machine as a whole: the individual parts, combinations of parts and the parts made up into a whole machine were all "articles" with a shape and a configuration.

The designs were "original" in the sense that they were the independent work of the designer of the Target machines: they had not been simply copied by him from the Gascoigne or Sudstall machine. The designs were original in the copyright sense.

The critical question was whether the designs ceased to be original by virtue of section 213(4).

Mr Watson submitted that all of the parts pleaded, and the combination of parts relied on as constituting the whole of the Target machine, were commonplace and therefore not original designs in which design right could subsist.

As for design right claimed in the Target machine as a whole, he contended that the result was commonplace because all that had been done was aptly described as "de-bugging" the various components of two old machines to produce a third machine.

Mr Silverman, on the other hand, supported the decision of the judge that neither the individual parts nor the machine as a whole could be described as commonplace: the parts, the combinations of parts and the assembly of all the parts into the whole Target machine produced a different design from that of the Gascoigne and Sudstall separators.

That new design produced a significantly better machine. It was not enough for the defendants to assert that the design was not new or novel. They had to show that the design had nothing out of the common.

His Lordship agreed with Mr Silverman.

In the light of the language, context and purpose of section 213(4), what was the proper approach of the court faced with the issue that the design of an article was not original because it was alleged to be "commonplace"?

1 The court should compare the design of the article in which design right was claimed with the design of other articles in the same field, including the alleged infringing article, as at the time of its creation.

2 The court had to be satisfied that the design for which protection was claimed had not simply been copied from the design of an earlier article.

3 If the court was satisfied that the design had not been copied from an earlier design, then the new design was "original". The court then had to decide whether that design was "commonplace". For that purpose it was necessary to ascertain how similar that design was to the design of similar articles in the same field of design made by persons other than the parties or persons unconnected with the parties.

4 The comparative exercise had to be conducted objectively and in the light of the evidence.

5 If there were aspects of the plaintiffs design of the article which were not to be found in any other design in the field in question, and those aspects were found in the defendant's design, the court would be entitled to conclude that the design in question was not "commonplace".

The judge's decision was consistent with that approach.

With regard to one part of the Target machine, the scraper assembly, his Lordship agreed with Mr Watson that the judge was wrong to find that the plaintiffs were entitled to a design right.

The judge's conclusion on the scraper assembly was based on the uniqueness of the spring loaded hinge. But no claim for a design right in the spring loaded hinge was pleaded and no originality in the shape or configuration of it had been identified.

In the absence of a properly pleaded claim in the spring, the judge was not entitled to find in favour of the plaintiffs on that part.

As to acquiescence, the position was that the plaintiffs brought the proceedings within the limitation period. The pleaded case and the evidence did not establish any reliance by the defendants on any representation or conduct of the plaintiffs inducing a reasonable belief in the defendants that the design rights did not exist or would not be enforced, so as to prevent the plaintiffs from enforcing their legal rights within the limitation period.

Accordingly, his Lordship would allow the appeal on the acquiescence point but dismiss the cross-appeal on the design right point, save as to the scraper assembly.

Sir Christopher Slade delivered a concurring judgment and Lord Justice Simon Brown agreed.

Solicitors: Briffa & Co: Freeth Cartwright Hunt Dickins, Nottingham.

No allowance for asylum seeker

Regina v Adjudication Officer, Ex parte B

Before Lord Justice Simon Brown, Lord Justice Peter Gibson and Lord Justice Schiemann

[Judgment December 9]

As from the coming into force of the Social Security (Persons from Abroad) Miscellaneous Amendments Regulations (SI 1996 No 30) an asylum seeker in Great Britain was not entitled to an award of disability living allowance.

The Court of Appeal so held by a majority, Lord Justice Simon Brown dissenting, in a reserved judgment allowing an appeal by the Secretary of State for Social Security against an order of Mr Justice Sedley (*The Times* July 27, 1998) quashing an adjudication officer's refusal of an application for disability living allowance.

Mr Richard Drabble, QC, for the secretary of state; Mr Roger McCarthy, QC and Mr Simon Cox for the applicant.

LORD JUSTICE SIMON BROWN said that the appeal raised a point of some importance as to the proper construction and application of section 12(3) of the 1996 Regulations.

The applicant was a Sri Lankan Tamil who came to the United Kingdom in 1992 and claimed political asylum.

He suffered from chronic renal failure for which he was under continual treatment. He claimed disability living allowance and an award was made on April 15, 1995 for a two-year period.

On February 5, 1996 the 1996 Regulations came into force. Regulation 4 disqualified from entitlement to disability living allowance persons whose right to reside or remain in Great Britain was subject to any limitation or condition. Such persons were so defined as to include asylum seekers.

Regulation 12 provided: "(3) Where, before the coming into force of these Regulations, a person is receiving ... disability living allowance ... under ... the ... [Social Security (Disability Living Allowance) Regulations (SI 1991 No 2890)] ... those Regulations shall, until such time as his entitlement to that benefit is reviewed under section ... 30 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992, have effect as if regulation ... 4 ... of these Regulations had not been made."

On April 1, 1997 the applicant made a claim for a further disability living allowance as from April 16, 1997. The adjudication officer refused the application on the ground that claims by way of renewal did not come within the protection afforded by regulation 12(3).

That, therefore, was the critical issue raised in the proceedings: whether on its true construction regulation 12(3) preserved all pre-existing allowance entitlement save where a subsequent review took place under section 30 of the 1992 Act, or whether it preserved only such allowance as was payable under awards made before February 5, 1996.

On October 30, 1998 the applicant was granted indefinite leave to remain on the basis of his exceptional compassionate circumstances and from that date there was no dispute that he became entitled to the benefit. His entitlement between April 16, 1997 and October 30, 1998, however, remained in issue.

Regulation 12(3), as both sides agreed, was a saving provision. But for regulation 12(3) regulation 4 would disentitle all claimants with only limited or conditional leave to be in the country, with effect from February 5, 1996. The issue, therefore, was as to the true scope of the exception to the normal rule.

The applicant relied upon the literal reading of regulation 12(3). Thus read, its effect was to disapply regulation 4 in the case of someone who was receiving the allowance before February 5, 1996 until, after that date, his entitlement came to be reviewed.

Mr Drabble advanced two main arguments to the contrary. The first was that it was the evident purpose of regulation 12(3) to exempt only entitlements under existing awards, and not entitlements arising under renewal claims submitted after February 5, 1996. The second argument invited the court to give a purposive construction to regulation 12(3). His Lordship would reject both arguments, with the result that he would dismiss the appeal.

LORD JUSTICE PETER GIBSON said that if the recipient of an award for a fixed period wished that award to continue after expiry of the period, he had to make a new claim to an adjudication officer which would be the subject of a fresh determination in exactly the same way as a claim made by a claimant for the first time.

The issue in the present case had arisen because the applicant, who on February 5, 1996 was in receipt of disability living allowance for a fixed period, made a fresh claim for the allowance on the expiry of the period.

The judge described the issue as being whether on its true construction regulation 12(3) had the effect that a claim by way of renewal did not lie within the protection afforded by the regulation or whether it preserved all pre-existing allowance save where a review took place under section 30 of the 1992 Act.

The judge favoured the literal construction of regulation 12(3), so that only a review, which in the present case did not occur, would cause a person in receipt of disability living allowance on February 5, 1996 to be denied by regulation 4 of the 1996 Regulations any entitlement to the allowance under the Disability Living Allowance Regulations.

To his Lordship's mind, the key to the meaning of the regulation was provided by the words "his [the person receiving the allowance before February 5, 1996 under the regulations] entitlement to that benefit was reviewed under section ... 30."

That person received disability living allowance only under an award made by an adjudication officer and his entitlement to that benefit was limited to what he had been awarded on the decision of the adjudication officer on a claim made to him.

The entire wording was consistent with the view that the draftsman was looking only to an award under which the person was receiving benefit on February 5, 1996.

A subsequent decision by an adjudication officer to make a further award after the expiry of the fixed period of an earlier award was irrelevant to regulation 12(3).

His Lordship would therefore hold that the language and context of regulation 12(3) indicated that the regulation was not intended to extend transitional protection to new entitlements to the allowance not in existence at February 5, 1996.

Accordingly, his Lordship would allow the appeal, set aside the order of the judge and dismiss the application for judicial review.

Lord Justice Schiemann delivered a judgment concurring with Lord Justice Peter Gibson.

Solicitors: Solicitor, Department of Social Security; Ms Eileen Bye.

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OPERA

Buoyant D'Oyly Carte returns to its roots

PAGE 28

THE TIMES ARTS

THEATRE

Beast slaves the day in Two Gentlemen

PAGE 29



Minstrels play to the gallery

Mixed fortunes have dogged the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company since its rebirth over a decade ago, but if this *Pirates of Penzance* turns out to be more than a seasonal success there may be hope for a once-great institution yet. It marks a return to the company's roots, not only in terms of traditional production style: after several years spent playing the Wand'ring Minstrel around the country, its visit to the West End is surely significant. Another sign of D'Oyly Carte's confidence is that it has moved its offices back home to London.

OPERA

The Pirates of Penzance
Queen's



DONALD COOPER

Spokes persons for Gilbert and Sullivan: Anna-Clare Monk (Mabel) and Christopher Saunders (Frederic) in D'Oyly Carte's West End entertainment

Even if today's equivalents of the figures Gilbert and Sullivan lampooned so mercilessly have not been able to see the need for a light opera company — one funding crisis has followed another — the public obviously does. Enter Raymond Gubbay, the impresario who would not put his money behind the outfit otherwise. Perhaps he and the D'Oyly Carte chairman, Sir Michael Bishop, tempted fate when in the programme they invoked Shaftesbury Avenue history: a century ago D'Oyly Carte's English Grand Opera foundered there rather quickly.

But this *Pirates* drew an audience whose enjoyment proved that the work remains topical, not least in its references to the House of Lords.

Stuart Maunder's production, in picture-book designs by Roger Kirk, will not please those deconstructionists looking for a Gilbertian subtext, but it is attractively and wittily staged within G&S convention. Lindsay Dolan's choreography adds a light touch at moments, such as the chorus of police, where things often turn heavy. This pirate ship is actually well-travelled: the production, toured by D'Oyly Carte before, originated at the now-defunct Victorian State Opera in Melbourne, where it cannot have had the immediate impact it makes in the cosy Queen's Theatre. Intimacy is the key here, in a performance that uses a reduced, theatre-band orchestration. Every word comes across from a cast with excellent diction, vital in G&S, but then several members are experienced in this repertory.

Richard Suart is a splendidly batty Major General, complete with kilt and pith helmet, Jill Pert is both formidable and funny as Ruth, and Gareth Jones is a gruff Sergeant of Police. Nicholas Todorovic puts a hard face on his soft-centred Pirate King, and Christopher Saunders displays a healthy tenor as Frederic. Anna-Clare Monk's pretty Mabel turns out bright coloratura. With the rest of the cast providing good support, this is an evening of undemanding fun, sometimes a little too undemanding: David Gibson's neat conducting can turn placid, not quite what is needed in Sullivan's strongest score.

JOHN ALLISON

RECOMMENDED TODAY

Guide to arts and entertainment compiled by Marit Hargie

LONDON



Ruby Turner brings soul to the Barbican

CINDERELLA: Sarah Wildor makes her debut in the title role in the Royal Ballet's lavish production of Frederick Ashton's evergreen set to Prokofiev's magical music. She is partnered by Michael Nunn as the Prince. Festival Hall (0171-960 4242). Today, 2pm.

MESSIAH: Steven Layton conducts the vibrant, young choral group Polyphony accompanied by the period orchestra Canzona in a seasonal offering of Handel's oratorio. With soloists Emma Kirkby, soprano, James Bowman, counter tenor, Mark Padmore, tenor, and David Wilson-Johnson, bass. St John's (0171-222 1061). Tonight. 7.30pm.

A GOSPEL CHRISTMAS: The London Community Gospel Choir and UK Voices are joined by soul diva Ruby Turner for an evening of uplifting gospel rhythms mixed with popular carols. Barbican (0171-638 8891). Tonight. 7.30pm.

SPITALFIELDS WINTER FESTIVAL: This concert by the City Chamber Choir featuring pieces by Gregory Rose and Jonathan Dove. Also on the programme are choral works by Warlock, Howells and Grainger. The audience is invited to join some of the numbers. Stephen Jones directs. Christ Church, E1 (0171-377 1362). Tonight. 6.30pm.

ELSEWHERE

ABERDEEN: Gareth Hudson conducts the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in an evening of Christmas classics including such favourites as *The Holly and the Ivy*, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer and White Christmas. To be broadcast on Christmas Day. Music Hall (01224 641122). Tonight. 7.30pm.

BIRMINGHAM: This year's panto-mime spectacular, Paul Elliott's glittering production of Cinderella, sees Brian Conley heading a star-studded cast in the role of Buttons with veteran pantomime dame Danny La Rue as Baroness Voluptua. Backing the cast will be a chorus of 12 singers and dancers and children from the Birmingham Stage School. Hippodrome (0121-622 7486). Opens tonight, 7.15pm.

NEW WEST END SHOWS

Jeremy Kingston's choice of theatre showing in London

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◪ **THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE:** The D'Oyly Carte Company brings Gilbert and Sullivan's joyful adventures with pirates, policemen and a modern major-general to the West End. See review, right. Queens (0171-494 5041).

☐ **QUATRE MAINS.** Astonishing dance for hands created by Andrew Dawson, creator of Thunderbirds FAB, and Jozef Houben, director for The Right Size. Lyric Studio, W6 (0181-741 2311). ◪

■ **CHICAGO:** Mana Friedman injects new blood into the hit revival of Kander and Ebb's musical about murder and fickle fame. Adelphi (0171-344 0055). ◪

☐ **DICK BARTON SPECIAL AGENT:** Journey back to the 1940s with the famous old radio thriller, brought to life by Phil Wilmott. Ted Craig directs. Warehouse, Croydon (0181-680 4060).

☐ **THE GOLEM:** David Burt and Gaye Brown star in an uplifting musical about the man-made monster who runs amok. New End, NW3 (0171-794 0022).

☐ **JESUS MY BOY:** Tom Conti in John Dowie's filthily amusing comedy giving Joseph's side of the story. Apollo, W1 (0171-494 5070).

◪ **PETER PAN:** Justin Salinger in the title role, with David Troughton as Captain Hook, in return of Fiona Laird's enjoyable production. Olivier (0171-452 3000).

◪ **THE SNOWMAN:** The much-loved Raymond Briggs characters soar in Bill Alexander's joyful production. Peacock, WC2 (0171-863 8222).

☐ **THE KING AND I:** Whistle a happy tune with Phil Willmott's Steam Factory production of the feelgood Rodgers and Hammerstein musical. BAC (0171-223 2223). ◪

FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE

Geoff Brown's choice of the latest movies

NEW RELEASES

THE PRINCE OF EGYPT (U): Splendid animation, but there's not much for luddites in the biblical story of Moses leading the Israelites to the promised land. Voice talents include Val Kilmer and Ralph Fiennes. Directors, Brenda Chapman, Steve Hickner and Simon Wells.

CURRENT

BABE: PIG IN THE CITY (U): Everyone's favourite talking pig faces the torments of the hostile city. Grotesque, misguided sequel to the hit film. With Magda Szubanski. Director, George Miller.

ON CONNAIT LA CHANSON (PG): Refined relationship comedy, with a marvellous cast and lip-synched snatches of popular songs. Alain Resnais directs Sabine Azéma, Pierre Arditi and André Dussollier.

RUSH HOUR (15): LA and Hong Kong cops join forces on a kidnap case. Routine fare, enlivened by Asian legend Jackie Chan and motormouth comic Chris Tucker. Director, Brett Ratner.

TWILIGHT (15): Down-at-heel private eye (Paul Newman) is lured into a murder mystery. Inconsequential plot, but a wonderful cast. With Gene Hackman, Susan Sarandon, James Garner. Director, Robert Benton.

OUT OF SIGHT (15): Escaped convict George Clooney finds himself talking for the federal marshal (Jennifer Lopez) on his tail. Dazzling, inventive version of Elmore Leonard's novel. Director, Steven Soderbergh.

BLADE (18): Extravagant, jumbled horror fantasy, fun for a time, with Wesley Snipes as the vampire-hunting action hero from the pages of Marvel Comics. With Stephen Dorff. Director, Stephen Norrington.

Austere in their grieving

For the people of Lockerbie, and the relatives and friends of those killed on Pan Am flight 103 ten years ago, the shortest day of the year must have seemed the longest in their lives. How to commemorate the time, the place, the people in music? How to provide appropriate resonance for the complex of emotions experienced by the large number of special guests at Westminster Cathedral?

The composer Gavin Bryars and two members of the Hilliard Ensemble devised the programme for the **Lockerbie Memorial Concert** on Monday. And it was, perhaps, significant that the music, both very old and very new, should have been minimal sometimes to the point of numbness. Harmony shunned resolution: bare, modal melody seemed to pose an eternally unanswered question.

The evening ended with Bryars's 30-minute *Cadman Requiem*, written in memory of Bill Cadman, Bryars's sound engineer who was killed at Lockerbie. His namesake, Caedmon, Northumberland's great shepherd-poet of the seventh century, sings through his Creation Hymn, here set as a plain-speaking baritone solo above a filigree *moto perpetuo* from Fretwork's consort of viols. The Venerable Bede's Latin paraphrase of this hymn forms a high tenor solo; and in between comes a bare, keening *Requiem*; an *Agnus Dei* of angry, tolling downbeats and a final, serene *In Paradisum*.

The Cadman family had commissioned Bryars to write a set of madrigals, with words by Blake Morrison. These, too, were austere; their close, slow-drifting harmonies spiked by dissonance, their melismas grey with many a dying fall. Throughout the concert, but particularly here, one longed for the words: their absence was a serious omission.

It would have been good to know just a little, too, about a certain Busnois and his enigmatically named *In Hydraulis*. This eloquent opening motet was, in fact, written by a late 15th-century French composer to extol the works of his contemporary, Ockeghem. Not strictly pertinent in the circumstances; but to locate him in time and space, together with the Flemish composer Nicholas Gombert, whose *Salve Regina* we heard, would have added a human dimension and a sense of the continuum of time.

CONCERTS

The fragile astringency of the consort of viols provided the instrumental tint for the entire evening: Fretwork also played Purcell's six-part *In Nomine* and John Jenkins's six-part *Pavane*, two moments when music really did offer solace and a glint of elusive transcendence in this sombre evening.

When **Christian Zacharias**, **Frank Peter Zimmermann** and **Heinrich Schiff** gave their outstanding performances of Anton Webern's miniatures for piano, violin and cello — several of them existing at the very limits of audibility — at the Queen Elizabeth Hall the audience seemed incapable of sitting still for ten seconds. Programmes were dropped, spectacles snapped, bags opened and closed. But the trio of musicians was unfazed. Schiff and Zacharias, in particular, played the Three Little Pieces for Cello and Piano as eloquently as I have ever heard them. Single bowed notes dissolved into piano clusters and sudden conjunctions sparked charges as both players recreated the minutest fluctuations of tone of voice for each concentrated gesture, each shard of sound.

This finesse of perception and delicate fluency of expression had also characterised the Beethoven Trio in C minor, Op 1 No 3. This was a performance of exquisite musicality, with phrasing shaped as if it were being painted on to porcelain, and individual entries often breathtaking in their beauty. But I missed the sheer sense of risk-taking and of adventure in a work considered so daringly avant-garde in its day that Haydn criticised it harshly.

But the refined sensibility of this trio worked wonders for Brahms. Schiff's sinewy cello set up a brisk momentum for the great river-flow of melody at the start of the Op 8 Trio in B. And with Zacharias's delightfully nonchalant piano playing, the long, ardent movement never sank in its own expressive mire. The Scherzo was dry, laconic. And then the wonder of the evening: a slow movement whose piano chorale and hushed violin and cello duetting made this music seem every bit as much a sound-journey into the unknown as the writing of Webern.

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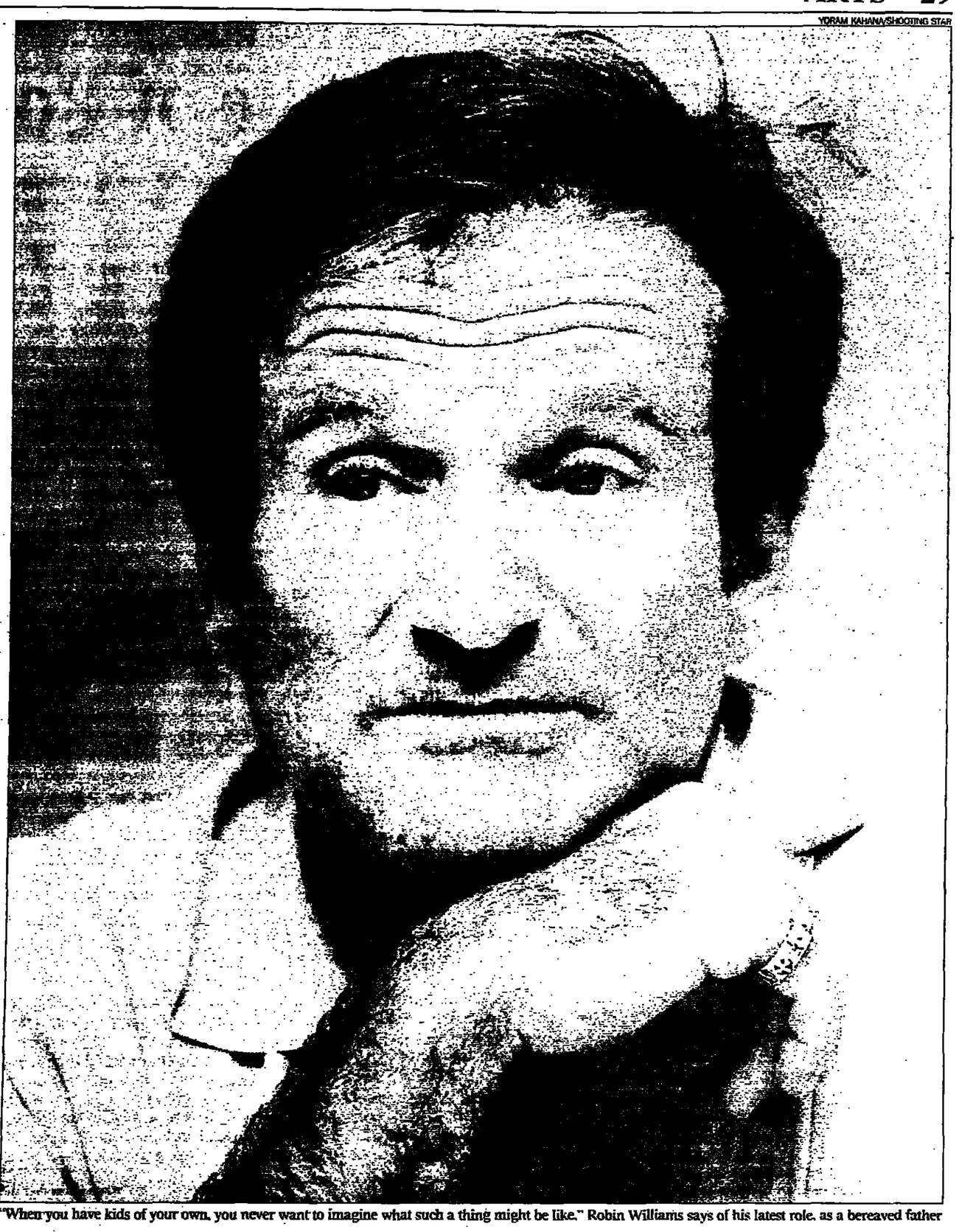
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Where do you go after Heaven?

CINEMA: In Robin Williams's case, you go back to an old love, stand-up comedy. **Lesley O'Toole** reports

YORAM KAHANA/SHOOTING STAR



"When you have kids of your own, you never want to imagine what such a thing might be like." Robin Williams says of his latest role, as a bereaved father

Robin Williams had no interest in making the film *What Dreams May Come*. He tried to tell the director so several times, but Vincent Ward was convinced that only Williams could pull off the role. "He was like a pitbull," remembers the film's reluctant star. "He kept on at me, saying: 'This is different; I believe we're going to make something extraordinary'."

Eventually, Williams gave in, bolstered by the knowledge that his screen wife was to be played by his close friend Annabella Sciorra. In retrospect, Williams says, Ward "was right. Everyone felt it on the film, right down to the grips and electricians."

Williams's hesitation was no reflection on Ward, only on the film's subject-matter. His character, Chris Neilson, not only loses his two young children in a car crash but is required to deliver the agonising eulogy at their funeral. "When you have kids of your own [Williams has three], you never want to imagine what such a thing might be like."

The eulogy scene was even more painful than he had imagined. "It lasted 13 hours. Just sitting there having to look at two coffins was bad enough. I had to go to a funeral for a child once. The father spoke and he was trying to get out what he felt because he wanted to make one last statement for his child. It was horrific for me to watch and to re-enact. Sometimes I'd get home from filming and I'd hug the kids so hard they would say, 'You're hurting me'."

But Williams was swayed by the film's "love story". Although *What Dreams May Come* also explores the issues of reincarnation and the afterlife, Williams was most moved by "this extraordinary journey and the use of technology to create something different, literally a different world". The different world is Heaven, a painting by Neilson's wife come to real, goopy life (Williams and the rest of the cast are seen literally walking in paint). As for his religious beliefs, Williams admits only to being "somewhat spiritual. I do believe in an afterlife. I'm really hoping I get to meet my father again, and that he has cable."

He was also flattered by the offer of a serious role even more demanding than the one in *Good Will Hunting* which finally earned him an Academy Award this year, albeit as Best Supporting Actor. He is not sure his winning the Oscar had any impact on film studios unsure of whether audiences want to watch Williams being dramatic, but thinks "they certainly will accept a serious role from me now because of things like *Good Will Hunting* and *Dead Poets Society*. But they will only accept me in a comedy if they buy the character. In *Father's Day* [an unsuccessful comedy Williams made recently with friend and fellow comic Billy Crystal], they obviously didn't buy him. Maybe he was just too strange or maybe the film didn't work. Mostly, though, I don't think I have a particular persona." In fact, two of Williams's highest-grossing films are *Mrs Doubtfire* and *Good Will Hunting*.

> 'I believe in an afterlife. I'm hoping I get to meet my father again, and that he has cable'

Although he would never allude to the fact, Williams's finally winning an Oscar was considered by many in the industry to be long overdue. He was first nominated for the film which made him a star in America, 1987's *Good Morning, Vietnam*. Still comparatively green as an actor, he only knew if his jokes worked "because the camera would vibrate. And it wasn't because it was meant to, like in *Saving Private Ryan*. It was because the cameraman was laughing." In 1989 he received his second Best Actor nomination, this time for *Dead Poets Society*, and in 1991 his name was in the frame again for his role in Terry Gilliam's *The Fisher King*. If Williams is peeved that the Oscar he finally nabbed was in the Supporting Actor category, he is not letting on. "I think a lot of people were very affected by the character, which is a great honour."

Another Williams vehicle about to be released in the US and opening in Britain next year utilises both his comedic and dramatic abilities. *Patch Adams* is "the true story of a doctor who was also a clown. He went through medical school in the 1960s at a very hardcore, really uptight Southern medical college and his belief was that the doctor-patient relationship is a very intimate one. Often people are trained to go the opposite way, to the point that they are so disconnected they don't know the patient's name."

Many of his co-stars were real terminally ill children. "There was one little girl who was extraordinary and so beautiful even though she was going through chemo and had lost all her hair. This was the closest thing to stand-up comedy because all of a sudden I was performing with her and the stuff she was coming back at me with was so funny."

Stand-up comedy remains Williams's first love. He recently promoted Eddie Izzard's shows in San Francisco and Los Angeles — "It was the only way to be sure I got tickets" — and thinks it's time he returned to the same arena. "Especially after doing a film like *What Dreams May Come*, I need the catharsis of stand-up. I want to go back, it's time. Stand-up just peels away any pretence pretty quickly because if you don't have the stuff, they won't laugh. You could bring out the Academy Award but audiences don't care. They'd say: 'You're still not funny'."

Should he tread the boards in Washington DC any time soon, Williams can expect at least one illustrious audience member. A long-time fan of and fundraiser for Bill Clinton, Williams cannot resist the opportunity to joke at his expense. At home in San Francisco recently, he received a call from a presidential aide asking if the Clintons might drop by to say hello. "What do you say? 'No, I'm sorry'? And all of a sudden, these big cars showed up and all these guys in black suits got out. They came in and started cavity-searching the dog, and then Bill was here. He was here for five minutes. He didn't hit on my mother. He was as charismatic and charming as always, but I always get very uncomfortable. I'm worried I'll make some off-colour joke in front of him. 'Oh, speaking of Internal Affairs ... Oops, sorry.'

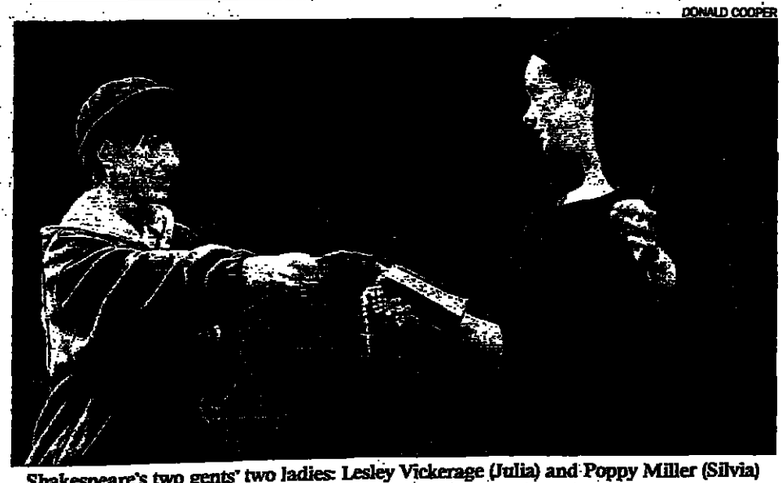
"Does it bother me that I helped his campaign and now he's in this stuff? Yes, it's deeply disturbing, but impeaching him for a blow job? Basically the whole world will go [slips into foreign accent]: 'We have to go. We're sorry America, we can't play with you any more. You are very damaged people.'"

Given a choice of being only funny or only serious for the rest of his life, Williams would need no time to debate the relative merits of each. "Oh, my God. It's like *Sophie's Choice*. There's a German officer [puts on German accent] going: 'So, you have a choice. You will be funny for all eternity.' Yes, I'll take the comedy because that, in my own life, is primal."

● *What Dreams May Come is reviewed tomorrow and opens on Saturday*

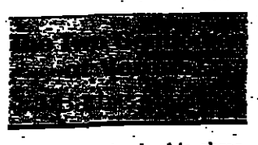
THEATRE: Barmy Bard makes surprising sense; panto full of East Anglian promise; and Battersea goes mystic

DONALD COOPER



Shakespeare's two gents' two ladies: Lesley Vickerage (Julia) and Poppy Miller (Silvia)

Happiness regained



How will Mariana cope with marriage to an Angelo who, as every fan of *Measure for Measure* knows, has thrown her over and played dreadful life-and-death games with a nun's chastity? Or the ghastly, fickle Bertram of *All's Well* live in harmony with Helena, who has got herself pregnant by him by pretending to be an innkeeper's daughter? You tell yourself that Shakespeare was in one of his merry mawkish moods, and, if the production is good, you succeed. With the early *Two Gents*, though, the denouement is more rushed, barmier, even more of an acting and directing challenge.

Think of the in-law problems in the offing for Valentine, who has tried to abduct the daughter of his host, the Duke of Milan, and, failing in that endeavour, become the leader of the group of banished banditti who capture the old boy in the forest. Imagine the future pillow-talk between Julia and her fiancé Proteus, who has been transformed into a monster by his obsession with Silvia, as the ducal daughter is called. Not only does he betray everyone: Duke, best-friend Valentine, Julia herself. The sweat from his last-ditch attempt to rape Silvia is still pouring from his brow as he is forgiven, reconciled with his former love, and dispatched to the altar.

If Edward Hall and his quartet of confused, confusing lovers persuade you to buy this denouement — and, yes, they do — it is somewhat in defiance of expectation. I have seen modern-dress productions of *Two Gents* that served the play well. Robin Phillips once set it on and around a beach in Rimini, a place where emotional skittishness was as inevitable as lurid bikinis and dark glasses. But Hall's invention, which includes a surprise party for Julia, rum goings-on in a swanky hotel, and a scene in an art-gallery with a disembodied head in a glass case, seems merely decorative. A spoof rendering of the beautiful *Who is Silvia?* by a narcissistic tenor is surely the pits.

Yet four unknown, gifted performers persuaded me that alongside the pits there were depths to this RSC staging. Dominic Rowan's Proteus is a sort of human laser, equally intense whenever and wherever his devotion switches direction. Tom Goodman-Hill's Valentine is a grave young man who can see the wisdom of making sacrifices and forgiving bad faith. There is a sweetness and honesty about both Poppy Miller's Silvia and Lesley Vickerage's Julia that makes their sisterly embrace at the end surprisingly moving. Could there be life and happiness after the ending of what is, on the face of it, one of the Bard's most perfunctory romances? Maybe.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE

Genie's light blue airs

Aladdin
Norwich

Last year's panto at the Theatre Royal in Norwich, *Babes in the Wood*, was set in a never-never England of mountainous castles where yeomen in colour-co-ordinated tights did fancy things with quarterstaffs. This year we are taken to an all-purpose Orient, with a couple of trips to Egypt on the side, and a touch of Russia evident when palanquin-pulling labourers intone a familiar chorus, presumably retitled the *Hwang-ho Boat Song*.

This seems absolutely right for a genre that hauls in anything from anywhere for its gags, songs and, most of all, for the costumes worn by the Dame. In this role we have Desmond Barrit again, doubling the role of Widow Twankey with the job of director, and favouring the colour orange for wigs. I lost count of how many costume changes he put himself through. A purple bell decorated with yellow pompoms stays vividly in the mind, although the neatest and overall the most becoming is the willow-pattern sugar bowl (with lid).

I wish genies came up through the floor, like they did when I were a lad. Here we are given a puff of smoke that is not quite puffy enough to conceal a figure stepping into place from behind a convenient slice of scenery. However, since Philip Ferentinos, the Genie of the Lamp, is 6ft 5in tall with abs and pecs to match, it may be that traps just aren't made big enough to encompass him.

Nichola McAuliffe plays the hero with a toothy grin and an impressive Norfolk accent, one of the country's trickiest to get right, and, along with Barrit's Twankey and Rikki Jay's engagingly cheery Wishee Washee, she enjoys some running gags at the expense of Christopher Cazenove's Abanazar. Someone forgets a line, others reply to questions that haven't yet been asked, and all flail around for a bit before redoing the scene. "Don't applaud incompetence," Barrit reproves us when we dare to clap. Of course the entire routine may have been scrupulously rehearsed. Whatever, these moments are joyful.

Writer (and assistant director) David Lambert stirs together jokes old and new, borrowed and blue. The songs are over-miked and some of the dialogue under-ditto, but the dancing by the ensemble of eight is crisp and swift (choreography by Bill Deamer).

JEREMY KINGSTON

All a bit iffy

Mary and the Shaman
BAC, SW11

It feels just too, too predictable to be humbuggy over a show dedicated to seasonal goodwill and charity, so instead of laying down the critical law, for once I shall leave the judgment wide open.

If you have little interest in plot, comprehensible structuring or any form of characterisation ... If you consider misfortune, be it through poverty, maltreatment, the illness of loved ones or simply bum luck, to be an indication of unrecognised goodness in a person, and therefore believe that constructing a cast out of a dispossessed souls variety pack (disaffected teenager, worried father and God's own bag lady) is a super idea ...

If you believe that we can really learn a lot from, like, a cursory understanding of really mystical ancient religious practices ... If you've always known for sure that those funny people you see talking to themselves in the street are actually wearing a pair of invisible holy aerials by which they pick up sacred messages transmitted to them by divine beings that float between heaven and earth, and not actually unhappy schizophrenics having conversations with a park bench ...

If you prefer to think of Father Christmas's red robes as harking back to the costumes of the ancient Siberian shamans, rather than a marketing ploy devised by a cola company which used red to replace both the original green and the rags of the Saint Nicholas character ... If you have never before heard the junky/hypocrite argument between grown-ups who like the odd glass of wine and teenagers who indulge in recreational stimulants, and feel that witnessing such an argument might change your world view on drug-taking and young people nowadays ...

If you believe that no production is complete without somebody raising their hands in the air slowly for the final bars of a song ... If you think people are more likely to undergo an extreme personality change in the festive season because it's a magical time ... then you will probably find *Mary and the Shaman* a joy and a revelation.

HETTIE JUDAH

GREAT BRITISH HOPES

Rising stars in the arts firmament

MICHAEL MORRIS



Age: 24.

Profession: General manager of the Old Vic Theatre.

Since when? Just a few months ago. "It was halfway through the run of *The Iceman Cometh*. Now Kevin Spacey is on our board."

Background: Father was in jeans: he ran Jean Junction. Mother was an assistant director in New York theatre and witnessed early work by the likes of Al Pacino and Meryl Streep.

Showbiz roots, then? Not really. Young Michael went to Winchester and read English at Oxford.

Early marketing coup: A show he directed at school was forbidden — "It was a bit violent" — so it was performed at the local girls' school instead, "became fashionable" and sold out.

Early artistic coup: At 16 he directed "an old pot-boiler", *The Business of Murder*, and raised the money to make it happen. Played as black comedy, it became the Critics' Choice at the Edinburgh Festival.

Lesson to remember: Arthur Miller, then Cameron Mackintosh Professor of Contemporary Theatre at Oxford, gave him acting notes after a scene from *All My Sons*. "He was really kind. I learnt what is theatrical, what is exciting — but, playing to Arthur Miller and a packed house, I will never ever be more scared."

Fairy godmother: Sally Greene, producer (now on the Old Vic board of trustees). "I must have written her six letters, but I started work for her within three or four weeks of leaving university. She is one of those rare people who give people a chance and take the flak if it goes wrong."

Ambition: "We have a common goal here to increase the audience of theatre, to get in the kind of people who on a Friday night go to a film. We want to make theatre dangerous again, to make it unpredictable. The Old Vic is the best place to be for that: it has a history of surprising people."

Project underway: Dressing rooms are being redesigned by big names in fashion — Moschino, Westwood, Galliano among them.

Dream project: To have poetry literally "writ large" on a giant 200ft-wide poster on the Old Vic Waterloo Road wall.

Off-duty activities: Writing music and poetry and directing comedy for late-night shows at the Criterion.

HEATHER NEILL

Test your knowledge and win prizes with The Sporting Quiz of 1998

Where was the Battle of Potato Patch Pitch?



A. This was the moment when Scotland realised the enormity of their task as Brazil scored the first goal in the opening game of the 1998 World Cup. Who was the scorer?

JANUARY

1 Which BBC programme celebrated its fiftieth birthday on January 3?
2 Which famous American tennis player died, aged 92?
3 Which Vauxhall Conference club refused to concede home advantage and insisted on playing an FA Cup fourth-round tie at home?
4 Of which nation did Don Talbot, the Australian swimming coach, say that they had been "caught with their hand in the cookie jar"?
5 Which Bath rugby union player was suspended for allegedly biting an opponent's ear?
6 Who stood down as chairman of Portsmouth after giving up control of the club?
7 Who was the only Briton to win an individual medal at the world swimming championships?

FEBRUARY

8 Who won the men's singles tennis title at the Australian Open?
9 Which club won the rugby union Heineken Cup final?
10 Who fractured his jaw in Tottenham Hotspur's 3-1 defeat away to Barnsley in the FA Cup?
11 Which England bowler took 11 wickets in the second Test against West Indies?
12 In which sport at the Winter Olympics was a competitor stripped of his gold medal for a positive test for marijuana, only to have it restored when he argued that he had been the victim of passive smoking?
13 Who said: "I think I gave this club a lot. I gave them success that no one could have dreamt we would have achieved. Now, I just want to know what the real reason is for me getting the sack"?
14 Who was England's highest scorer in both the first and second innings of the third Test against West Indies?
15 England equalled their highest number of points in international rugby against Wales at Twickenham. How many?

MARCH

16 Which British triple jumper set a world indoor record in Valencia?
17 Where did Manchester United play a European match described as "The Battle of Potato Patch Pitch"?
18 Which England threequarter said that if internationals abandoned their clubs and signed contracts pledging their long-term future to the Rugby Football Union, it would be akin to "turkeys voting for Christmas"?
19 Which England cricketer made his maiden Test-match century against West Indies after seven years as an international player?
20 Which horse won the Tote Gold Cup at Cheltenham?
21 Who won both women's races at the world cross-country championships?
22 Which university won the Boat Race?
23 Who did Chelsea beat in the Coca-Cola Cup final?
24 Which boxer was "The Enforcer" in Wrestlemania XIV in Boston, United States?



B. Which is the ground where the pitch was so badly cracked that a Test between West Indies and England had to be abandoned?

APRIL

25 Which horse won the Martell Grand National?
26 Which English footballer won the PFA Young Player of the Year award?
27 Which British swimmer tested positive for taking cocaine?
28 Which player returned to county cricket after a 19-month ban for taking cocaine?
29 Who won the Masters golf?
30 Which former winner of eight world snooker titles died?
31 In what sport did Tania Follett become a manager?
32 Who won the men's race in the Flora London Marathon?
33 Which Olympic gold medal-winner was found to have a high concentration of whisky in her urine during an out-of-competition test?

MAY

34 Which club did Arsenal beat to clinch the FA Carling Premiership title?



35 Who won the world snooker title?
36 Where did Blidworth Welfare, known as the worst football team in England, receive expert coaching from John Gorman and Ray Clemence?
37 Which country staged its first mixed international meeting to celebrate the Year of Women in Athletics?
38 In which sport did Mavis Steele celebrate her fortieth consecutive year as an international player?
39 Who scored Chelsea's goal in the Cup Winners' Cup final?
40 Which rugby union club won the Allied Dunbar Premiership first division title?
41 To publicise which sport was an England international photographed for an advertisement, lying in seductive pose, draped in black dress and red lipstick, with the caption "8.30pm. My place"?

The Times presents today the traditional festive challenge — the Quiz of the Sporting Year. Test your knowledge on the milestones and misfortunes that made 1998 a year to remember and you may be the winner of a magnum of champagne. The sender of the first all-correct entry drawn — or if necessary the entrant with the most correct answers drawn — will receive the champagne, worth £40.

The first two runners-up will receive copies of *The Davis Cup: Celebrating 100 Years Of International Tennis*, by Richard Evans (Ebury Press, £14.99, mailorder 01206 255800). The first copy has been signed by the victorious Sweden team that beat Italy in the Davis Cup final in Milan earlier this month.

Four more runners-up will win copies of *The Spirit Of Football*, a photographic record featuring the work of the Sportsphoto agency (Kensington West Productions, £14.99).

Closing date for entries is Friday, January 15, 1999.

MAY

42 Which country beat England 76-0 in a rugby union international?
43 Which team registered the biggest victory in the history of the National Basketball Association finals in the United States?
44 Who crashed into a tyre wall at Donington in his debut race in the *Auto Trader* RAC British touring car championship?
45 Which Colombia player was sent home from the World Cup because of his angry reaction to being substituted?
46 Which British television football commentator retired after the World Cup?
47 Which Scotland player was sent off in the 3-0 defeat by Morocco in the World Cup?
48 Which player parted with his coach during Wimbledon because the player insisted on taking part despite an injury?
49 Where did Middlesex play a county championship game for the first time since 1859?

JUNE

50 Which players missed penalties for England in the shoot-out against Argentina in the World Cup?
51 To whom did Tim Henman lose in the men's singles at Wimbledon?
52 Who won his seventeenth medal at Henley Royal Regatta?
53 Who became the oldest man to win a world heavyweight boxing championship by taking the IBF title?
54 Which former England football captain announced his retirement?
55 Who won the British Grand Prix?
56 Who scored France's third goal in the World Cup final?
57 In which country did the Tour de France start?
58 Justin Rose's equal fourth at the Open golf was the highest place by an amateur in this championship since whom?
59 Who announced his retirement from athletics after not being named for the individual 400 metres at the European championships?

JULY

60 Which Englishwoman became the female cricketer with the highest aggregate score in Test-match history?
61 Who scored his maiden Test century against South Africa at Headingley?
62 Who said after the publication of a book: "It has not affected my enthusiasm for the job one bit because I don't think the controversy is justified. I have not considered resigning"?
63 Who won the men's 100 metres at the European athletics championships?
64 Who signed for Manchester United for £12.6 million?
65 How many gold medals did Britain win at the European athletics championships?
66 Which famous cricketer celebrated his 90th birthday on August 27?
67 Who was fined £1,000 for being late for practice at the Oval Test match?
68 Who won his fourth world triathlon title?

AUGUST

69 On which island did Fifa permit the experiment that when a free kick is disputed by any player the ball is moved ten yards forward?
70 Which England player was sent off in the European championship qualifying game in Sweden?
71 Which county won both the AXA League and NatWest Trophy in cricket?
72 Whose record for home runs in a baseball season did Mark McGwire break?
73 Who won the rugby sevens at the Commonwealth Games?
74 Which English athlete won a second Commonwealth Games gold medal 16 years after his first?
75 Which former Olympic champion died at the age of 38?

SEPTEMBER

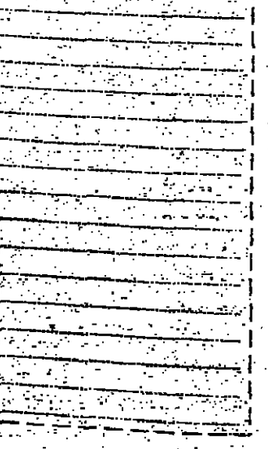
76 Who was the referee when Paolo Di Canio and Martin Keown were both sent off?
77 Which former Arsenal manager was appointed the new manager of Tottenham Hotspur?
78 Which Scottish club complained that, because of the uneven pitch, goalposts for a Cup-Winners' Cup tie were too large?
79 In which sport did a team celebrate the tenth anniversary of its greatest victory by beating Guernsey 14-2?
80 In which city does the world's biggest half-marathon start?
81 Who kicked Eyal Berkovic on the chin during a West Ham United training session?
82 Which country won the world showjumping championship in Rome?
83 What is the name of the famous cookery writer, who together with her husband, is the majority shareholder of Norwich City?
84 Who was runner-up to Mark O'Meara in the World Match Play golf final at Wentworth?

OCTOBER

85 In which country did Mika Hakkinen win the Formula One world championship?
86 Which jockey became only the fourth to ride 200 winners on the flat in a season?
87 Which footballer scored his last goal for an English club against a team to whom he was about to be transferred?
88 Who sent personal letters to members of the West Indies party urging them to tour South Africa for the sake of young players in his country?
89 Which England batsmen broke the record for the highest stand for any wicket by an overseas team in Australia?
90 Who became the first president of Athletics UK, the national governing body?
91 Which former world champion said after losing 9-0: "It was inevitable, sooner or later, that something like this was going to happen"?
92 Which manager was sacked when his club dropped to last place in the Premiership?
93 Who won the only match between Greg Rusedski and Tim Henman in 1998?

NOVEMBER

94 Who resigned as chairman of Everton?
95 Who became the new manager of Blackburn Rovers?
96 Who scored England's try in their 13-7 victory over South Africa?
97 Which Somerset non-League club beat Northampton Town in the FA Cup?
98 Which university won the Oxford v Cambridge rugby union match?
99 Which Pakistan cricketer said: "This shows that I was a victim of a conspiracy hatched by the Australians"?
100 Who scored 179 not out for Australia in the third Test at Adelaide?



C. Winner of every grand slam singles title except Wimbledon, now this former world No 1 is a regular on the seniors tour. Who is he?

HOW TO ENTER THE QUIZ OF THE SPORTING YEAR

FILL IN your answers on the entry form and send it, with your name, address and daytime telephone number, to: QUIZ OF THE SPORTING YEAR, Sports Department, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN to arrive by Friday, January 15, 1999. The prize will go to the first all-correct entry – or, if necessary, the entrant with the most correct answers – drawn from those received by the closing date. The Sports Editor's decision is final and correspondence will not be entered into. The winners and solutions will be published on Tuesday, January 19, 1999. The competition is not open to employees of News International, their relatives or agents

1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 ..... 10 ..... 11 ..... 12 ..... 13 ..... 14 ..... 15 ..... 16 ..... 17 ..... 18 ..... 19 ..... 20 ..... 21 ..... 22 ..... 23 ..... 24 ..... 25 ..... 26 ..... 27 ..... 28 ..... 29 ..... 30 ..... 31 ..... 32 .....

33 ..... 34 ..... 35 ..... 36 ..... 37 ..... 38 ..... 39 ..... 40 ..... 41 ..... 42 ..... 43 ..... 44 ..... 45 ..... 46 ..... 47 ..... 48 ..... 49 ..... 50 ..... 51 ..... 52 .....

53 ..... 54 ..... 55 ..... 56 ..... 57 ..... 58 ..... 59 ..... 60 ..... 61 ..... 62 ..... 63 ..... 64 ..... 65 ..... 66 ..... 67 ..... 68 ..... 69 ..... 70 ..... 71 ..... 72 .....

73 ..... 74 ..... 75 ..... 76 ..... 77 ..... 78 ..... 79 ..... 80 ..... 81 ..... 82 ..... 83 ..... 84 ..... 85 ..... 86 ..... 87 ..... 88 ..... 89 ..... 90 ..... 91 ..... 92 ..... 93 ..... 94 ..... 95 ..... 96 ..... 97 ..... 98 ..... 99 ..... 100 .....

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Chris McGrath on the young jockey booked for the King George favourite

Tizzard relishes business opportunity

Though tradition has it that the star appeared in the East, this Christmas wise men — or shrewd punters, at any rate — have instead been led to stables in the West. For, as the National Hunt season unravels into midwinter, its three leading trainers are all based in Somerset. They are led, predictably, by Martin Pipe, but the nearby yards of Paul Nicholls and Philip Hobbs are in vigorous pursuit.

The most pertinent emblem of the west awake, however, is a farmer's son named Joe Tizzard. On Boxing Day he rides See More Business, favourite to repeat last year's success in the King George VI Chase. Comparisons with Michael Owen are no easier to discourage for the fact that he is just a day older than the blur-legged footballer; both have just turned 19. Nor has this second, fresh-faced, slender colt shown any sign of light-headedness, despite a rise that would dizzy the most impervious of scrumpy drinkers.

"If he were the sort of person who would let it all go to his head, he wouldn't be doing the job in the first place." Such is the sober judgment of Nicholls, who recently promoted his apprentice to stable jockey. Many senior riders would fret at the expectations of this ambitious, high-spending yard, but Tizzard shows every sign of coping with a discernment that could never be taught.

That his nature is as ingenuous as his talent has long appealed to Paul Barber and John Keighley, principal patrons of the Nicholls yard. As local landowners, they provided the stage where the young prodigy first became the talk of Somerset horsefolk.

"I was aware of what people were saying," Tizzard said, without a hint of conceit, after riding his 37th winner of the season at Ludlow yesterday.

"I've ridden since I was old enough to sit on a horse. I was taken out hunting on a leading rein when I was something like six and was taken off halfway through the day. You can't learn to be a natural horseman, though of course you are always improving as a jockey. I go through videos to find every fault. I'm no Dunwoody or McCoy yet riding a finish, but it's all coming together and I'm getting a lot of experience very quickly."

You can say that again. To ride See More Business is every bit as much of a challenge as it is a privilege. Though he has the constitution to kick a postbox out of the ground without breaking stride, he also has a weakness for testing that resilience when spotting a fence. Such a bumpy ride would put a less temperate teenager off his cranberry sauce.

Neither Tizzard's impending responsibility, nor a physique better suited to cleaning windows than riding horses, will do that. "I'm six foot and I suppose weight may be a problem later," he said. "For the moment, it isn't, and I can have plenty of turkey on Christmas Day." As for See More Business, he brings only tidings of comfort and joy.

"This horse has got one gear at which he can keep going all day," he said. "Just floats along. We were delighted with his first run of the season, at Haydock, when he looked the winner turning for home and just got tired. He'll come on again for his win at Chepstow."

Tizzard added: "Kempton is probably not his favourite course, but soft ground will suit him and he showed last year he's good enough. You've just got to let him pop away. He's not scopey, but he has a great heart. I remember schooling him at Mendip two years ago and even that was amazing. He knows he's the business. I'm really excited to be riding him. But it was nice to get the Chepstow win out of the way, to keep quiet whoever wanted to say anything."

Not that he will ever silence his most diligent critic — and most steadfast counsel. His father, Colin, has kept his feet not so much on the ground as knee-deep in mud. Before he turned professional last summer, Tizzard had already won at the Cheltenham Festival (Earthmover in the Foxhunters') and over the Grand National fences when just 17 (on With Impunity). He has ridden in the National itself twice. Yet afterwards he would go home and do the milking.

Ireland's continuing supply of jockeys is a reflection of a relatively robust agricultural society. Here it is increasingly rare to find a young man blessed with Tizzard's instinct for animals. His emergence is something to treasure and to ponder. He, meanwhile, will just keep doing what comes naturally. "It's a young man's game," he said. "Or so I hear, anyway."

Coral buyer, page 21

Controversy raged at Ludlow yesterday over the state of the ground at the fog-bound track. A total of 19 horses were withdrawn by connections rather than run on the frost-affected going, while many felt Bob Davies, the clerk of the course, was wrong not to hold a precautionary inspection.



CHRIS ISON

Tizzard offers See More Business a few words of encouragement before they team up in the King George VI Chase at Kempton on Boxing Day

Hourigan names Carberry for Dorans Pride

BY OUR RACING STAFF



Carberry: Ericsson ride

PAUL CARBERRY has been signed up to ride Dorans Pride in the Ericsson Chase at Leopardstown on Monday. Carberry replaces regular partner Richard Dunwoody, who will be on Florida Pearl for trainer Willie Mullins in the same race.

Dorans Pride's trainer, Michael Hourigan, delayed his decision on a jockey as long as possible and, in view of the absence of Dunwoody, said yesterday: "I have settled on Paul Carberry. He is available and he will do a good job."

Dunwoody is looking forward to riding the unbeaten Florida Pearl. He said: "It's likely to be a small field, but it's a fascinating contest and it certainly won't be a walkover. Florida Pearl is in very good form and it should be a great race."

Dunwoody, at one time a contender for the mount on Imperial Call in the Pertemps King George VI Chase at Kempton, will be riding at Wetherby on Boxing Day instead.

"I'll be going to Wetherby to ride for my retained owner, Mr Ogden," Dunwoody confirmed yesterday. "I ride Colonel In Chief for him up there and possibly a couple of rides for Jimmy Fitzgerald including Symonds Inn."

Symonds Inn, seventh to Benny The Dip in the Derby, has won both his starts over hurdles in great style and Dunwoody added: "He's a very good horse and it looks like we'll be taking on Lord Lamb. I think they are two good novices."

Direct Route is on course for the Castleford Chase at Wetherby on Monday, for which six entries have been confirmed after the race was reopened yesterday.

The seven-year-old was the impressive winner of Sandown's Mitsubishi Shogun Tingle Creek Chase under a confident ride from Norman Williamson last time and the gelding's trainer, Howard Johnson, said yesterday: "He's come out of the Sandown race just great — he's a tough devil. Let's hope he gets good ground, he jumps off it better. We are still frosted up here so he's gone to Redcar for a canter on the sands."

Direct Route will be renewing rivalry with Lake Kariba, who recovered from a bad blunder at the first to finish fifth at Sandown and previously had beaten Direct Route a distance at Exeter in November.

Andrew Thornton was the jockey who performed miracles on Lake Kariba at Sandown, but will be replaced by stable jockey Joe Tizzard in the £32,000-added two-mile event.

The recent Cheltenham winner, Flying Instructor, has been confirmed a runner at Wetherby by his trainer, Paul Webber. He said: "He definitely runs and I'm hoping Jamie Osborne will be able to come up to ride."

Track specialist Cumbrian Challenge is another entered, but this eight-time course winner has been below par so far this season. The field is completed by the promising novice Desert Mountain, from Neville Callaghan's Newmarket stable, and Lord Dorcet, runner-up to Viking Flagship in the race last year, who is an intended runner.

Trainer Alistair Charlton's wife, Margaret, said: "He's got a nice weight and he loves Wetherby so we are going with Brian Storey riding."

Lord Dorcet has raced just once so far this season when he finished in arrears behind Dontleavethenest at Ascot in October, having suffered bruising when kicked in the sternum.

TOMORROW

Full guide to the ten meetings on Boxing Day

Pitman opens up and lets the reader in

Richard Evans on three books which serve to entertain and inform this Christmas

The mother of Jenny Pitman decided one Christmas to buy her young daughter a beautiful doll as a present. The response was immediate.

"As I pulled it out of its wrapping paper my heart sank, and I didn't even bother to pretend. 'I don't like dolls,' I told Mum. Within minutes I had all its legs and arms off."

The marvellous anecdote tells us a lot about racing's most famous woman trainer. And not just that certain jockeys or "gentlemen of the press", as she refers witheringly to journalists, can count themselves lucky to be still in one piece after crossing the formidable Mrs P.

From her earliest days she was something of a tomboy, who inherited a passion for horses. Under the expert eye of a wonderful father on a small farm halfway between Melton Mowbray and Leicester, she developed an eye for a good horse and terms like "back at the knee" or "straight in front" became second nature. And it was that education — rather than the school she studiously avoided whenever possible — which has provided the backbone to a remarkable career.

Just about everyone knows Mrs Pitman is the first woman to have trained a winner of the Grand National at Aintree, but what makes her autobiography such an enthralling read are the chapters detailing the lesser known areas of her life, particularly her upbringing. The style as well as the content is also very much in keeping with the author. Forthright, passionate, honest - and amusing.

Her's is a remarkable story, with victories and achievements in life often gained against the odds.

In these days of sexual equality, it is easy to forget Mrs Pitman was something of a trailblazer, although to describe her as a "women's libber" would almost certainly provoke one of her infamous ticking-offs.

Love her, or not - and both camps are well subscribed - this autobiography is one of the most enjoyable of its kind. Yes, there is plenty about her equine stars - Burrough Hill Lad, Corbiere and Garrison Savannah - but, above all, this is a book which helps the reader understand a complex character.

Racing needs its heroes - equine and human - to keep up the interest of punters, who help to fund the sport. Unlike the United States, few good books have been published about betting on horses in Britain, which makes *The Inside Track*, by Alan Potts, all the more welcome.

The former computer operator became a professional punter eight years ago - and has not looked back. Like most punters, he is self-taught and his book offers an insight into how he maintains an edge over the bookmakers. The chapters on the importance of speed figures and on spread betting are particularly illuminating.

By contrast to Potts' well-written offering, *Computer Racing Form* is as dry as dust, containing endless pages of statistics and facts. But to the discerning punter, the annuals produced by John Whitley - containing timefigures and form ratings derived from a computer-handicapping system - are gold dust. Whitley does not advertise his work: he does not need to. To his devoted followers, including this punter, they make the difference between loss and profit with unfailing regularity.

☐ *Jenny Pitman: The Autobiography*, (published by Partridge Press, £17.99).

☐ *The Inside Track: The Professional Approach*, by Alan Potts (published by Rowton Press, £18.00).

☐ *Computer Racing Form*, by John Whitley (21 Upper Green Lane, Hove Edge, Brighouse, West Yorks, HD6 2NZ, £56).

SNOW REPORTS

	Depth (cm) L	U	Piste	Conditions Runs to Resort	Off-p	Weather (5pm)	°C	Last snow
Andorra								
Soldeu	60	80	Good	Open	Varied	Sun	3	21/12
Austria								
Kitzbühel	35	78	Good	Hard	Powder	Cloud	-12	21/12
Obergurgl	35	150	Good	Open	Powder	Cloud	-10	21/12
Soll	20	75	Good	Open	Powder	Fair	0	21/12
Canada								
Lake Louise	95	100	Good	Open	Powder	Sun	-16	15/12
France								
Alpe d'Huez	32	140	Hard	Artificial	Varied	Sun	-8	20/12
Avoriaz	25	80	Fair	Open	Varied	Fine	-6	20/12
Chamonix	40	145	Good	Some	Varied	Sun	-5	20/12
Flaine	50	140	Good	Open	Varied	Sun	-6	21/12
Les Arcs	32	155	Good	Some	Packed	Sun	-8	21/12
Megève	15	75	Fair	Icy	Varied	Sun	-12	21/12
Méribel	40	100	Hard	Icy	Varied	Sun	-6	21/12
Tignes	45	140	Good	Open	Varied	Fine	-2	21/12
Val Thorens	50	120	Good	Hard	Varied	Fine	-2	21/12
Val d'Isère	44	110	Good	Icy	Varied	Sun	-8	21/12
Valmorel	25	90	Good	Open	Packed	Sun	-1	21/12
Italy								
Cervinia	10	130	Good	Open	Varied	Fine	-6	21/12
Livigno	15	80	Good	Artificial	Packed	Fine	-12	20/12
M di Campiglio	20	50	Hard	Open	Packed	Sun	-13	20/12
Switzerland								
Crans Montana	5	120	Fair	Artificial	Varied	Sun	-9	12/12
Grindelwald	30	80	Good	Artificial	Varied	Sun	-4	21/12
Klosters	30	120	Good	Open	Varied	Sun	-11	21/12
Murren	40	100	Good	Some	Varied	Sun	-11	21/12
Saas Fee	10	140	Hard	Icy	Varied	Sun	-9	21/12
St Moritz	10	50	Fair	Closed	Packed	Sun	-6	21/12
Verbier	15	80	Good	Closed	Varied	Fine	-4	21/12
Wengen	20	70	Good	Icy	Powder	Sun	-10	21/12
Zermatt	15	90	Fair	Open	Varied	Fine	-8	21/12
United States								
Aspen	80	75	Good	Open	Powder	Fair	-20	21/12
Deer Valley	70	80	Good	Open	Packed	Fair	-28	20/12

L = lower slopes U = upper slopes

http://www.skiclub.co.uk

YESTERDAY'S RESULTS

Ludlow

Going: good (good to soft in places)

12.45 (2m hdle) 1, Fern's Governor (A P McCoy, 10-1); 2, Eden Heights (4-1); 3, Just Good Fun (7-4 fav). 13 ran. NR: Brilliant Star, Dancing In Rio, Floristan, Mobaye, Saguaro. 16l, ¾l. M Pipe. Tote: £12.40, £2.80, £2.20, £1.10. DF: £26.40. CSF: £46.62.

1.15 (2m 4f ch) 1, Jessaro (Gary Lyons, 7-4 fav); 2, Raffles Rooster (2-1); 3, Full of Bounce (20-1). 5 ran. NR: Blatant Outburst, Damas, Michenado. 20l, 10l. W Jenks. Tote: £2.50; £1.40, £1.40. DF: £2.90. CSF: £5.10. Tricast: £35.40

1.45 (2m hdle) 1, Briggs Tom (A P McCoy, 2-1 fav, Thunderer's mate); 2, Wayfarers Way (11-2); 3, Shehani (20-1). 8 ran. NR: Mardjolaro, Royal Then, Trade Wind. ¾l, 6l. B Llewellyn. Tote: £2.70; £1.10, £2.70, £4.10. DF: £6.40. CSF: £12.88. Tricast: £154.82.

2.15 (3m ch) 1, Noisy Miner (R Johnson, 7-2); 2, Pennyman (3-1 co-fav); 3, Spring Gale (3-1 co-fav). Class of Ninety'two (5th) 3-1 co-fav. 7 ran. NR: Beatson, Hoodwinker, Symbol of Success. 9l, 15l. D Nicholson. Tote: £4.90; £2.40, £1.70. DF: £7.70. CSF: £13.40. Tricast: £30.81.

2.45 (2m 5f 110yd hdle) 1, Tempestuous Lady (M A Fitzgerald, 8-11 fav); 2, Primitive Star (33-1); 3, Smokey Diva (10-1). 9 ran. NR: Chelworth Vi, Roborette. 10l, ¾l. N Henderson. Tote: £1.80; £1.10, £3.60, £1.70. DF: £33.60. CSF: £26.69.

3.15 (2m ch) 1, Supreme Charm (N Williamson, evens fav); 2, Jack (12-1); 3, Non Vintage (13-2). 8 ran. NR: River Wye, Royal Calibh. 14l, 9l. K Bailey. Tote: £1.90; £1.50, £1.10. DF: £4.90. CSF: £11.51.

3.45 (2m flat) 1, Starting Again (J Tizzard, 10-1); 2, Bowl of Gold (2-1 fav); 3, Macaw-Bay (11-4). 16 ran. NR: Get On George, The Ugly Gunner. 1¼l, ¼l. Capt T. Forster. Tote: £5.10; £2.30, £1.80, £1.80. DF: £8.10. CSF: £26.02.

Jackpot: £1,668.70.

Placepot: £5.60. Quadpot: £4.80.

Southwell

Going: standard

12.00 (1m 4f) 1, Johnnie The Joker (Dean McKeown, 7-2); 2, Cashaplenty (9-4 fav); 3, Copper Cookie (40-1). 10 ran. 3¼l, 3l. J Leigh. Tote: £5.30; £1.80, £1.20, £8.00. DF: £9.90. CSF: £10.37. Tricast: £238.46.

12.30 (5f) 1, Elton Ledger (R Price, 1-5 fav); 2, Going Places (16-1); 3, Divide And Rule (40-1). 8 ran. NR: Indiaash. 2l, 6l. Mrs N Macauley. Tote: £1.20; £1.10, £2.00, £8.60. DF: £3.90. CSF: £3.89.

1.00 (1m) 1, Top Flit (W Ryan, 5-1); 2, Baron de Pichon (33-1); 3, Love Diamonds (6-4 fav). 12 ran. Sh hd, hd. W Haggas. Tote: £8.00; £2.00, £5.80, £1.50. DF: £263.40. CSF: £163.24. Tricast: £343.67.

1.30 (5f) 1, Mary Jane (Metie Hanssen, 7-2); 2, Polar Mist (9-4 jt-fav); 3, Squire Corrie (4-1). Malla (5th) 9-4 jt-fav. 9 ran. 1¼l, ¾l. J Berry. Tote: £4.50; £1.30, £1.10, £1.50. DF: £4.30. CSF: £10.90.

2.00 (1m 4f) 1, Nikita's Star (G Bardwell, 6-1); 2, Golden Lyric (5-1); 3, Repton (7-2 fav). 9 ran. 2l, hd. M Brittain. Tote: £7.70; £2.80, £1.40, £1.90. DF: £25.10. CSF: £32.09. Tricast: £109.14.

2.30 (7f) 1, Love Academy (R Fitzpatrick, 9-1); 2, Weeman's Weigh (5-1 jt-fav); 3, Italian Symphony (10-1). Topton (4th) 5-1 jt-fav. 16 ran. NR: Goosmersham Park. ¾l, 3½l. M Johnston. Tote: £14.10; £3.60, £2.40, £3.20. DF: £48.40. Trifecta: £232.40. CSF: £52.40. Tricast: £448.80.

3.00 (5f) 1, Grassiandik (J Quinn, 9-2); 2, Keen Hands (20-1); 3, Ladycake (7-1). Socializer (4th) 5-2 fav. 14 ran. Sh hd, 2½l. A Newcombe. Tote: £5.50; £1.90, £6.60, £2.20. DF: £139.00. CSF: £97.63

3.30 (6f) 1, Dahlidya (F Doe, 20-1); 2, Mutabeesar (11-10 fav), 3, Ocker (6-1). 14 ran. NR: Baptismal Rock. 1l, 3½l. M Polglase. Tote: £21.20; £3.50, £1.50, £2.60. DF: £25.30. CSF: £38.70. Tricast: £161.88.

Placepot: £21.00.

Quadpot: £11.40.

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

BY ROBERT SHEEHAN, BRIDGE CORRESPONDENT

"Busy" tournament players are keen to double artificial bids to suggest a lead. On the plus side the doubler can enjoy the sound of his own voice and may be able to direct a winning lead partner would not otherwise have found. On the downside such doubles give information away to the opponents. From time to time even a fairly sound double can be punished in more brutal fashion. That was the story on this hand from the 1998 Chicago Nationals, reported by Brian Glubok.

Dealer North — Game all — IMPs

	♠ A Q 9 ♡ A J ◇ A Q 8 ♣ A Q 7 6 4	
♠ J 8 5 ♡ K 9 ◇ 9 7 3 ♣ K 10 9 5 3	N W E S	♠ 10 4 2 ♡ Q 10 6 5 ◇ J 6 5 4 2 ♣ 8
	♠ K 7 6 3 ♡ 8 7 4 3 2 ◇ K 10 ♣ J 2	

Contract: Three Clubs Redoubled, by South. Lead: seven of diamonds.

North opened Two No-Trumps and South responded Three Clubs, asking North to show a four-card major. With two honours in the suit, West doubled, a plausible, but hardly automatic choice. After all, he did have help in two other suits partner might otherwise choose to lead. Replace the nine of clubs with the two and I would say the double was definitely wrong. North naturally redoubled West's double and Glubok (South) courageously passed.

Glubok won the diamond lead in hand and led the jack of clubs, covered by the king and ace, pinning East's singleton eight. He crossed to the king of spades and played a second club to the nine and queen, and then led the seven of clubs to dislodge West's ten. Winning the diamond exit, South cashed his spade and diamond winners and played the ace and jack of hearts. Dummy's 6-4 of clubs won the last two tricks sitting pretty over West's 5-3. Three clubs doubled and redoubled with two vulnerable overtricks was worth 1640.

As Glubok concluded: "Be careful with your lead-directing doubles. They can be very expensive."

☐ *The Times Book of Bridge 2*, featuring the best of Robert Sheehan's daily columns is now out. Order your copy from Chess & Bridge (369 Euston Road, London NW1 3AR, tel: 0171 388 2404) who are offering 25% discount off all Batsford titles in December. The normal price is £7.99, post free for *Times* readers.

KEENE on CHESS

BY RAYMOND KEENE
CHESS CORRESPONDENT

Short wins

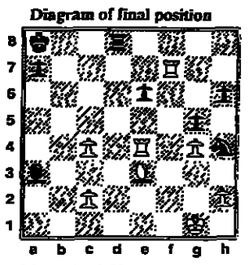
Nigel Short shared first place in the Monarch Assurance Isle of Man tournament with international master Emil Sutovsky, of Israel. Leading scores were Short and Sutovsky 7/9; Ehlvest, Baburin, Fridman and Ledger 6. Here are two wins by Nigel Short.

White: Nigel Short
Black: Igor Rausis
Monarch Assurance
Isle of Man 1998

Caro-Kann Defence

1	e4	c6
2	f4	d5
3	e5	c5
4	d3	Nc6
5	g3	f6
6	Bg2	Nh6
7	Nf3	Be6
8	0-0	Qd7
9	Nc3	fxe5
10	Nxe5	Nxe5
11	fxe5	0-0-0
12	Qe1	Bh3
13	Bxd5	e6
14	Bg2	Bxg2
15	Kxg2	Nf5
16	Ne4	h8
17	Qc3	Kb8
18	Rf2	Qc7
19	Bd2	Be7
20	a3	Rd4
21	Kg1	Rhd8
22	b3	g5
23	g4	Nh4
24	Be3	Rxe4
25	dxe4	Qc6
26	Qc4	b5
27	Qe2	Qxe4
28	Qxb5+	Ka8
29	Qe2	Qxe5
30	Re1	Qd5
31	Bc1	c4
32	bxc4	Qb7
33	Qe4	Qxe4
34	Rxe4	Bc5
35	Be3	Bxa3
36	Rf7	Black resigns

Diagram of final position



White: Nigel Short
Black: Daniel Fridman
Monarch Assurance
Isle of Man 1998

Petroff Defence

1	e4	e5
2	Nf3	Nf6
3	Nxe5	d6
4	Nf3	Nxe4
5	d3	Nf6
6	d4	g6
7	Nc3	Bg7
8	Qe2+	Qe7
9	Bf4	Qxe2+
10	Bxe2	0-0
11	0-0-0	Bf5
12	Rhe1	Nc6
13	Nh4	Bd7
14	d5	Ne5
15	h3	a6
16	a3	h6
17	Be3	g5
18	f4	gxh4
19	fxe5	dxe5
20	Bf2	Nh7
21	Bxh4	f5
22	d6	cxd6
23	Rxd6	Bc6
24	Nd5	Bxd5
25	Rxd5	b5
26	c3	Ng5
27	Bd1	Kh8
28	Bc2	Ra7
29	Bf2	Raf7
30	Rd6	Ra8
31	Red1	Rff8
32	Rb6	e4
33	Rd7	Rf7
34	Rxf7	Nxf7
35	g4	fxg4
36	Bxe4	Rf8
37	hxg4	Nd6
38	Rxd6	Rxf2
39	Rxa6	Bf6
40	Bd3	Rf4
41	Be2	Bg5
42	Kd1	Black resigns

WORD-WATCHING

By Philip Howard

CHILIASM
a. Doctrinal speculation
b. Pleasurable burning sensation
c. South American rift valley

CONULATA
a. Fossils
b. Choral works
c. A battleground

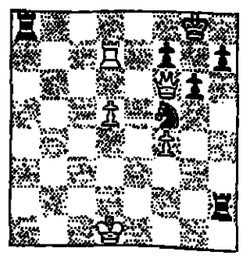
SPICA
a. A Roman coin
b. Confectionery
c. A bandage

MILLSCALE
a. Soprano notation
b. Flakes
c. Price of flour

Answers on page 34

WINNING MOVE

By Raymond Keene



Black to play. This position is from the game Suetin — Hodgson, Hastings Premier 1991. Although nominally White has a tiny material advantage, he is hamstrung by the position of his king which is trapped on the back rank. Can you see how Black forced a decisive material gain?

Solution on page 34

Beckenbauer proving to be as big an influence off the field of play as he was on it

Germany laying solid foundations

Rob Hughes reports on a nation that, regardless of a lack of political support, is winning the battle to stage the most treasured event in football

JOHN PRYKE



Beckenbauer fears that the fight between England and Germany to stage World Cup 2006 could open the door for another bidder

When Franz Beckenbauer played football, so imperious was his style and so influential his leadership, that it was assumed he ran the German team. Now that he is de facto the most important administrator in Germany, some of the smooth athletic charm has rubbed away, replaced by an occasional cold determination to get results.

He played *libero* — but no one takes liberties with him. Beckenbauer was in Geneva last year when the England Football Association renounced any obligation to the "Gentleman's Agreement" whereby England would give way to Germany as the official European candidate to host the 2006 World Cup.

"I shook hands with captains of England and believed their word," Beckenbauer said. "After today, I am not sure any longer. We will both spend ridiculous money and, while England and Germany fight each other, the real winner could be a bidder from the outside."

He had Brazil in mind: now South Africa is another leading factor. However, Beckenbauer is no novice in the commercial and political reality of sport. He commands huge persuasion through adidas and Mercedes-Benz, through Bayern Munich, where he is president, through the Deutsche Füssball-Bund (DFB) where he is vice-president and responsible for winning the World Cup bid, and through his newspaper and television commentaries. So when Beckenbauer called DFB officials a bunch of amateurs last month, their response was to put him in charge.

Beckenbauer starts from a winning position. At least seven of the eight European members on Fifa's 24-man executive committee will stick to their signed agreement to back Germany. They are not bound to voting for their own continent, but what they will not do is switch their vote to England.



The matter of honour aside, a fundamental difference between England and Germany is that England wants the World Cup to recoup the £600 million spent on developing the safety and structure of stadiums following the Heysel, Bradford and Hillsborough disasters, while Germany needs the event to stimulate regeneration of now aging infrastructures. "We have modern stadiums," Beckenbauer said, "but not quite good enough for the 21st century. By 2006, they will be perfect."

He carefully avoids the word "if". Yet the struggle for prosperity since the Berlin Wall came down does not encourage Bonn to give similar political weight to sport as the English Government does. A German Government panel recently cast doubt on the ability of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder to cut unemployment below 4.25 million, and described the national mood as "somewhere between hope and desperation".

Against this pessimism, it is not surprising that opposition exists and that politicians going to the hustings were muted about a German World Cup. Since the change of Government in September, however, plans to reconstruct the crumbling Berlin Olympic stadium, with the federal exchequer contributing 18 per cent of the £200 million cost, the city providing the same, and football and private enterprise meeting the balance, have been announced. Moreover, Leipzig is preparing a 50,000-seat stadium for January 2000, the centenary of the founding of the DFB in that city.

So two virtually new stadiums, monuments to Germany's pledge to make this the first World Cup in Germany since reunification, are under way. Furthermore, visits to some of their stadiums can give out misleading signals about the structural readiness of the country.

For instance, at Gelsenkirchen, the home of Schalke 04, the stadium is a decaying bowl reminiscent of the pre-Hillsborough period in England. Step into the directors' suite, though, and you can examine the DM358 million (about £137 million) futuristic sliding-roof arena that will seat 62,000 in weather-proofed comfort from the summer of 2001. The foundations are laid, the cost is arranged through local business, bank loans and investors. Development is on schedule.

At the end of this month, the DFB will examine the files of 22 cities that two years ago pledged themselves to meet all Fifa stadium requirements without picking the federal purse. Germany is well into the planning stage for a World Cup it, with perhaps a shade of arrogance, presumed would come back to this continent just eight years after France 98.

"The official DFB declaration was submitted to Fifa in Zurich as early as 1993," Egidius Braun, the German Football Federation president, said. "We feel it is commensurate with the strength and the importance of European football to organise the World Cup tournament every eight years."

If you are African, Asian or from the Americas, that might sound a presumption too far. The expansion to 32 nations in the finals does put enormous pressure on infrastructure and security, yet with a billion dollars from television per World Cup, and potentially even more from marketing, the developing continents are banging the drum of equality. The rotation principle, sharing the tournament with the world, started in Uefa, where Braun is a senior member.

Indeed, the patrician style of Braun spreads further afield. One close observer in the corridors of power points out that "Braun and Issa Hayatou [the African confederation president] respect one another", a hint that they will help the causes of each other. And the South American confederation is also looking to accord with Europe through the Uefa channel. Secret pacts may have been made and there are suggestions that the outcome will be Germany in 2006, South Africa four years later.

What then of the change, articulated by an English supporter that "Germany's 2006 bid is dead in the water" when Sepp Blatter defeated Lennart Johansson, the Uefa president, for the leadership of Fifa last June? Premature, perhaps. Germany should never be counted out, particularly when it comes to football.

Blatter, in any case, is publicly committed to Africa, and has hinted that Brazil has a strong case to broaden the base of international football. However, Blatter is not João Havelange, the former president of Fifa. He has one vote, and not yet such influence over a significant number of the executive committee to sway matters — much less to dictate — as Havelange did for 24 years. The reign of autocracy is over, persuasion is the game, and the oldest rule in the committee book is that persuasion comes from inside.

Germany began systematically preparing its bid 13 years before the event, and not for the first time England woke up late to find the towels laid out and the whole beach claimed. There has been a pacing to German thoroughness that the English, with their belated £10 million challenge, have yet to comprehend.

There is a commitment to time-serving on the committees of Fifa and Uefa, where for more than 25 years Germany has diligently placed officers. There is an order through the DFB hierarchy that makes Braun only the seventh president in 99 years, and made Beckenbauer the fifth of seven national team trainers, although he had no coaching badge and was called Teamchef.

Regardless of this, Beckenbauer won the World Cup as captain in 1974 and was in charge of the team that won the tournament in 1990. Who would dare bet that he will not succeed Braun in the highest office and preside over a 2006 World Cup in the Fatherland?

Braun would not step aside until well into 2000 for three reasons. First, Braun's handshake abroad, if not, at present, his grasp at home where German football is faltering, is irreplaceable. Second, he has laid the stones on which Beckenbauer walks. Third, the "Gentleman's Agreement", that England broke and Germany kept, involved Braun so it would be tactically naive for him to step down until the votes are cast.

In football, Germany's word is as reliable as its taking of penalties. From 1974 to 1992, Hermann Neuberger was the organiser of World Cups, making things work for Havelange. When Neuberger died, Braun took charge.

Nothing he does is illegal. Boring, it may be, but the way of the world is through committees. The United Nations is a committee of almost 200 countries, Fifa a greater number, and if the British felt their hereditary gift to the game and its organisation meant it is still owed a turn on the World Cup cycle without putting a shoulder to the wheel, it is mistaken.

What Germany has, around Beckenbauer, is a system that is tried and tested, though arguably in a changed Fifa era. What it lacks, or keeps discreet, is political support with a capital P.

England, after so many Olympic bids that failed, it is understood because of ministerial indifference, is not lacking in this particular area. "We are winning on this one" Tony Banks, Minister for Sport, told 250 delegates of British administrators at the Central Council for Physical Recreation congress in November. "I know, because I'm out there talking to the people who matter." Banks has been good to his word, leading the England bid into darkest Africa and furthest Latin America.

Banks had left the stage before Bob Scott, who tried so often to bring the Olympics to Manchester, opined: "I hope he's not being seduced by kind words, because that happened to me."

Something else that Banks said, in a speech railing at the "traitors" who have any doubts about England winning the 2006 bid, was: "We don't wander the world offering great wads of money. We've given the world the English language and modern sport. The world respects us."

However, a month can be a long time in sports politics. Since Banks spoke there have been revelations about how much the FA was prepared to give Wales for a seat at Fifa's inner table. In addition, FA handouts to Argentina, Mali, Botswana and Cameroon, all by coincidence countries with Fifa executive votes, have been unearthed.

"We are asking people to vote for us," Alec McGivan, director of England's 2006 campaign and fellow traveller with Banks and Bobby Charlton, said. "What is more natural than for them to say 'Is there any way you can help us?' That's the real world."

The real world is that you deal on the inside, or apparently you pay as an outsider.

HEINZ DUCKLAU



Braun, left, looks at a model of the new stadium at Schalke 04 in Gelsenkirchen

THE COUNTRIES WITH THEIR EYES ON THE PRIZE

Bidding for the 2006 World Cup reaches its first official milestone on December 31, the date by which countries wishing to enter the billion-dollar race must lodge a letter of intent to Fifa, the world governing body of football, in Zurich.

The seven letters so far received are from England, Germany, Brazil, South Africa, Egypt, Ghana and Morocco. Nigeria has yet to confirm speculation that it intends to bid.

On another dimension, Ghana has suggested a pan-African World Cup, across the vast continent that has never staged the World Cup, and Argentina dabbled in proposing a joint venture with Brazil. However, the 24-man Fifa executive committee, which determines the destination, will not favour another complicated joint bid so close to the 2002 Japan/South Korea World Cup.

It will be one nation, probably from South Africa, Germany, Brazil and England. The bids — involving enormous political, commercial and logistical commitments — face four subsequent deadlines: by April 30, 1999, the countries must confirm their intent; by July 31 they must produce a complete presentation; by the end of September a Fifa inspection panel will assess the infrastructures; and in March 2000 the vote will decide.

The prize is extraordinary, but so are the demands of organising a 32-nation event involving 12 stadiums capable of seating a minimum of 40,000 with the logistics of travel, accommodation, security, organisation and telecommunications under review. Political and economic stability will help, as will the ability to keep the heads of the hosting Football Association *in situ*.

TOMORROW

Why Brazil must be taken seriously in the bidding process

Alcock falls over himself to forget Di Canio

Russell Kempson finds the controversial referee desperate to put the Hillsborough incident firmly behind him

At 4pm, shortly after school's out near the Chequers shopping centre in Maidstone, Kent, Paul Alcock, the centre manager, gazes out of his window and takes in the show. Three pupils walk down the road, pause a while and then engage in a mock shoving match. One staggers backwards and falls over in an exaggerated manner.

The boys laugh, look up at the darkened glass, hurl a few insults at the man they know is watching behind it, and move on. They have done it every school day since Alcock, the FA Carling Premiership referee, tumbled to the ground during the now infamous incident at Hillsborough; the incident in which he was pushed over by Paolo Di Canio, the Sheffield Wednesday striker, after he had sent off the hot-tempered Italian.

Three months on, the adolescent encores have become tiresome. "It got to me in the end. I was getting really stewed up about it," Alcock said. "I had to go out and talk to the lads. A couple of times, fair enough — they're only 15-year-olds — but when it's every day, when it went on and on, I just got sick of it."

Alcock reasoned with his juvenile tormentors. "I said: 'You shouldn't behave like that. It's pathetic what you're doing'. All I got was a gobful back, so I banned them from the centre. The following day, they were out there again." The power of television, the lasting effect of the instant and incessant replay, had left a deep impression on playful young minds.

Alcock, 45, can smile in adversity. On Monday, he received a Christmas card from his security staff. It depicted a swarthy-looking footballer, a Di Canio clone in blue-and-white striped shirt, being sent off by a referee. "I don't mind that," he said. "The guys got it off the shelf and had obviously gone out and searched hard for it. I think it was great."

He still receives the occasional wry comment as he patrols the 87 shops under his jurisdiction, mingling on the frontline with the 250,000 shoppers a week that pass through Chequers, but the barbs are receding. Not that he is likely to forget the events of September 26.

Although he quickly resumed refereeing, he has been unable to take a game since November 15. He has a herniated disc in his back, a possible result of his dramatic tumble, and is considering taking legal action against Di Canio. "I'm pursuing advice on the best way forward," he said yesterday. "That's all I can say." He is also suing a BBC radio presenter who described him as a "fat useless ponce".

Alcock recalls every detail from Hillsborough, of how "an ordinary game of football, it was going along nicely" erupted in such extraordinary scenes. And the push, *that* push. He recalls it dispassionately, without a hint of emotion.

"I showed Di Canio the red card and the next thing I remember is trying to get my balance and stand up. I wanted to stay up, that's why it probably looked so comical, and I was fighting to stay on my feet, but I went. It seemed a lifetime when I was on the ground."

Danny Wilson, the Wednesday manager, consoled him. "He was brilliant, he helped me to get my composure back," Alcock said. He requested, and was given, an extra five minutes during half-time to steady himself. "I needed that extra time," he said. "I needed to get my act back together, I was trying to get myself motivated for the second half. I felt if I didn't go out there, I wouldn't go out again." The second half passed off peacefully.

Phil Watling, Alcock's travelling companion, drove him back to Kent. "That's when the shock really hit me," Alcock said. "I'd normally drive home, but I told Phil to. I couldn't, my body felt so tense. I kept wondering 'Why should I have to cope with something like that in a game of football?' and I also hadn't realised what the aftermath would be like and the stress it would put on my family."

Writing his report, a task that normally takes five minutes, took him an hour. He then watched the incident, for the first time, on *Match Of The Day*. "I was shocked, I didn't realise how bad it had looked. The more I saw it, the more it hurt, and it's still getting aired today. You keep seeing it, it keeps haunting me, it won't go away." The media hounds descended the next day, ravenously hunting their pound of flesh. "My wife, Maggie, dealt with all that, telling them to get lost, but my little lad, James, couldn't understand what it was all about. He got quite upset and when kids get upset, you get upset."

Ridicule swiftly followed. Ian Wright and Neil Ruddock, the West Ham United players, lampooned him during a goal celebration and also appeared on *They Think It's All Over*, the irreverent television sports quiz, to explain their party piece. "You can have a laugh and a joke, but when it turns into a pantomime, it gets a bit monotonous," Alcock said. "Di Canio apparently said I dived, as did other people, and that wasn't pleasant. Why should I dive? What gain have I got from falling over?"

Yet if and when their paths cross again, Alcock will harbour no grudges. "I won't have a problem refereeing him," he said, "as long as he plays in accordance with the laws of the game. I hold no malice against him, he's been punished, he's been dealt with. I'm not a sulker, I just want to get on enjoying my refereeing. At the end of the day, I was the victim."

SIMON PHYTHIAN



Bear market: Alcock, the shopping centre manager, at work

Liverpool compete to sign Lehmann

BY RICHARD HOBSON

LIVERPOOL face competition from Borussia Dortmund in their attempt to sign Jens Lehmann, the AC Milan goalkeeper. Liverpool are believed to have made an offer of about £4 million for Lehmann, who was in the Germany squad for the World Cup finals.

The deal hinges on whether Stefan Klos, the Dortmund goalkeeper, joins Rangers. If Klos agrees to move to Ibrox, Lehmann, 29, is likely to prefer a move back to his native country with Dortmund.

Steve McManaman, the Liverpool winger, completed a friendly match and is in line to make his Premiership comeback at Middlesbrough on Boxing Day.

Trevor Sinclair and Neil Ruddock, the West Ham United players, had their cases adjourned for two weeks and were given unconditional bail when they appeared before Romford magistrates yesterday. Sinclair was charged with criminal damage and Ruddock with affray after an alleged incident involving a car and its driver outside an Essex nightclub on Saturday.

Bryan Richardson, the Coventry City chairman, admitted culpability last night after being charged with misconduct by the Football Association for an alleged verbal attack on Steve Dunn, the referee, after the FA Carling Premiership game against Wimbledon on December 5.

Mark Hughes, of Southampton, has been given a two-match ban for being booked 11 times this season. He will miss the game against Chelsea, his former club, on Boxing Day. David Beckham will be a spectator for Manchester United's FA Cup third-round clash with Middlesbrough at Old Trafford. Beckham will miss the tie on January 3 because he will be serving a one-match ban after picking up his fifth booking of the season.

Tottenham Hotspur are involved in negotiations to sign Steffen Freund from Borussia Dortmund. The German international is understood to be available for £3 million.

Robert Molenaar, the Leeds United centre back, will miss the rest of the season with cruciate ligament damage.

SNOOKER

Davis hopes that dream ticket will calm storm

BY PHIL YATES

STEVE DAVIS, as clear-thinking on as off the table, is convinced that snooker's internal divisions will widen unless the present regime of the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association (WPBSA) is removed today.

Davis is joined by such well-respected figures as Terry Griffiths and Dennis Taylor, all three former world champions, in standing for election to the WPBSA board of directors at what promises to be a stormy annual general meeting at the Strathallen Hotel, Birmingham.

"The present board are square pegs in round holes, who know nothing about big business and who are not prepared to restructure the association," Davis said. "If there is no change, then snooker players deserve what they get and should never moan again about lack of sponsorship and the like."

Davis, Griffiths and Taylor, along with seven other challengers for board positions, badly want to see the introduction of proper management systems. In effect, the dream ticket, as they have been described, want the power to give power to professional sports administrators rather than leave it in the hands of former players and others they regard as unqualified.

"We haven't got the experience to run the game and neither have they. We want to employ a head-hunting firm who will find the people the game obviously needs so desperately. Unless we try a different route, we will never know what can be achieved," Davis said.

The argument of Davis and, indeed, all of the anti-board candidates, is based on sound logic. Ironically, Rex Williams, the present hands-on chairman, was elected on a similar mandate but ignited an ongoing civil war by supporting the controversial sacking of Jim McKenzie on December 1, 1997.

McKenzie, well liked by many within the game, was deemed to be working too closely with Ian Doyle, head of the Cuemasters management stable, which boasts a clientele including Stephen Hendry, Ronnie O'Sullivan, Ken Doherty and Mark Williams. McKenzie's case for breach of contract is scheduled for the High Court on January 11.

Williams, 65, is himself not up for re-election today, but he could lose his chairmanship to a vote of no confidence if, after the AGM, four or more of the seven directorships are occupied by those who oppose his policies.

However, Jim Meadowcroft, Ray Reardon, David Taylor and Jim McMahon, all Williams loyalists, are involved in an election process which, at best, could be described as idiosyncratic: at worst, downright unfair.



Davis: new route

A fifth vacancy was opened by the resignation of Terry Crabb, the WPBSA's development officer, last month. Crabb was co-opted onto the board on June 4, but this move was not notified to the membership until the annual report was distributed on November 23.

An electorate of 76, comprising players ranked in the top 64 this season and last, plus board members, cast yes and no votes. However, the natural assumption that the five candidates with most yes votes are elected, would be incorrect.

First, votes for the four present board members will be counted. Depending on the number of places available after this, the votes of challengers will be counted in an order already determined by the WBPSA.

Taylor is first on this list, but Davis is fifth and Griffiths, the chairman in waiting, ninth. It is, therefore, possible that Griffiths could poll more yes votes than anyone else, and not have them counted, let alone be elected. It is hardly a system befitting an association whose president, Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare, is a champion of democracy.

Since McKenzie's dismissal, a series of well-publicised decisions have made snooker, despite its healthy viewing figures and exciting pool of talent, the kind of politically unstable environment that, as any student of economics will tell you, is likely to attract little outside investment, no matter the potential return.



MARTIN SYKES

Ben Wright, a crewman, stands on one of the hulls of *Playstation*, a giant catamaran that was launched in Auckland, New Zealand, last week (Edward Gorman writes). The boat has been built for Steve Fossett, an American who is presently attempting to fly nonstop around the world in Richard Branson's *Ico Global Challenger* balloon, in order to compete in The Race, a non-stop round-the-world event that starts in December 2000. *Playstation* is 105ft long and 60ft wide, and has a single 140ft mast that is capable of carrying a sail area of 1,000ft, but it may not be the biggest of its type for long. Pete Goss, of Britain, is building a 120ft catamaran, designed by Adrian Thompson, that is due to be launched next year. Fossett plans to warm up for The Race with a series of record attempts, starting with the 24-hour distance record next month and a transatlantic crossing in March.

SAILING

Southern Ocean again foils Autissier

BY EDWARD GORMAN
SAILING CORRESPONDENT

IT IS beginning to look as though Isabelle Autissier, the first lady of French single-handed sailing, will never realise her dream of winning a solo round-the-world race. On each of her three attempts, the Southern Ocean — specifically the southern Indian ocean — has been her undoing.

Autissier set off from South Africa 17 days ago, on what is almost certainly her last attempt at a round-the-world title, hoping her luck would change. "It is my turn," she joked as she prepared to set off, having finished the first leg of the Around Alone race just 2½ hours behind Mike Golding, the race leader, on *Team Group 4*. But it was not to be, yet again.

PRB led for a lengthy period before Autissier reported damage to the mainsail track in high winds last week. She was quickly haemorrhaging miles to Golding, Giovanni Soldini on *FILA* and Marc Thiercelin on *Somewhere*. It was all the more frustrating because the damage was to a new mast designed for this race. Having dropped back to more than 500 miles behind Soldini, the new leg leader, Autissier is heading for Adventure Bay, in Tasmania, to effect repairs.

At the head of the fleet, Soldini now has less than 2,000 miles to go to the finish in Auckland and yesterday he was roaring along at an average speed of 16 knots and closing on Tasmania fast. Golding was just 96 miles behind and looking comfortable in second place with Thiercelin a further 127 miles behind him in third.

In Class 2, Mike Garside, of Britain, in *Magellan Alpha*, is 137 miles behind J. P. Moulligne, of France, on *Cray Valley*, who has led for almost a week and is 1,000 miles further east than Soldini.

RUGBY UNION: ULSTER CAUGHT IN DISPUTE OVER EUROPEAN CUP SEMI-FINAL VENUE

French grounds for concern

BY DAVID HANDS, RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

THE organisers of the European Cup (ERC), haunted by the absence of English clubs this season, were forced yesterday to rebuff French accusations of bias over arrangements for the semi-finals next month. Max Guazzini, the communications magnate who is president of Stade Français, could barely conceal his anger that his club must play Ulster on the evening of January 8 at Ravenhill.

In a letter to Roger Pickering, chief executive of ERC, Guazzini pointed out the problems that date would cause supporters travelling to Belfast, as well as the limited exposure the club sponsors would receive since French television will show only a highlights package the next day. The French had hoped the two semi-finals could be played on successive Saturdays, January 9 and 16, allowing both matches to be broadcast live.

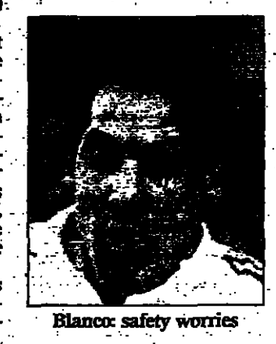
Guazzini also stressed the safety aspect, a point taken up by Serge Blanco, president of the French League of Clubs. Guazzini has instructed lawyers to check the stadium's capacity on the eve of the match and has washed his hands of any responsibility in the event of crowd problems. Blanco acknowledged it was difficult to understand how a stadium holding no more than 11,500 for the pool rounds could have its capacity increased to the 20,000 required by ERC.

"The most important point is the safety of people at the match," Blanco said and hinted that the French would review the events of this season in detail when it came to debate over the future of the tournament. Guazzini, a lawyer who has represented various showbusiness personalities, stressed the co-operative role adopted by Stade Français, the 1998 French champions.

"When the English clubs withdrew, we decided to continue to participate despite considerable pressures to withdraw. I would add . . . that we made a key contribution to the competition by our efforts to convince the other French clubs to remain in at a time when their participation was in grave doubt. We are not afraid about playing at Ravenhill but we do not accept that your decisions should be determined by the particular interests of one party," Guazzini told Pickering who, yesterday, sent a letter of reassurance that the arrangements of the Ulster authorities met the requirements of the Department of Health and Safety.

He would have been happy to have played the semi-finals on successive weekends, provided that the game between Colomiers and Perpignan came second, on the basis that if Ulster beat Stade Français, the final is likely to be at Lansdowne Road on January 30 and more than a fortnight would be required for the necessary arrangements to be made.

That argument has been scorned by Guazzini, who believes that both the playing and commercial views of the French have been disregarded. "Despite being president of a club rightly considered ultra-conservative, I have begun to understand the behaviour of the English clubs, without adhering to their philosophy," he said.



Blanco: safety worries

FOR THE RECORD

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

NATIONAL LEAGUE (NFL): Miami 31 Denver 21.

BOWLS

SCOTTISH INTERCLUB LEAGUE: Premier division: Section A: Prestwick 67 Auchinleck 64, Gaffcon 64 Tumff 61; Edinburgh 59 East Lothian 93. **Section B:** Stirling 56 West Lothian 95, Midlothian 69 Bainfield 84, Blantyre 78 Lanarkshire 86. **First division: East section:** Cumbernauld 75 Balbardie 64; East Fife 82 Headwell 69; Fraserburgh 69 Aberdeen 82. **West section:** Inverclyde 93 Paisley 67; East Kilbride 80 Irvine 79; Ayr 73 Coatbridge 82.

CRICKET

TOUR MATCH: Pietermaritzburg: West Indians 375 (S Chanderpaul 182) and 95-3; South Africa A 293 (S G Koenig 52). Match drawn.

SHEFFIELD SHIELD: Final day of four: Sydney: New South Wales 360 (S R Waugh 116, M E Waugh 64, P A Emery 58, M Inness 4-69) and 326-4 (M E Waugh 126, M J Slater 4-69) and 326-4 (M E Waugh 126, M J Slater 113, S Lee 71 not out): Victoria 438-8 dec (B J Hodge 120, M P Mott 105, I J Harvey 82). Match drawn. Perth: South Australia 503-6 dec (D A Fitzgerald 167, J M Vaughan 157 dec (D A Fitzgerald 167, J M Vaughan 157 dec (D A Fitzgerald 79) and 209-6 dec (J not out, B A Johnson 79) and 209-6 dec (J not out, B A Johnson 79) and 209-6 dec (J D Siddons 125 not out, M J Nicholson 5-49): Western Australia 354-8 dec (D R Martyn 123, J L Langer 64) and 174-8 (M E Hussey 57, M A Harrity 4-35). Match drawn. Standings: 1, South Australia 5-16. 2, Victoria 6-16, 3, Western Australia 5-14. 4, Queensland 5-10; 5, Tasmania 5-10, 6, New South Wales 6-6.

FOOTBALL

Monday's late results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: Charlton 0 Aston Villa 1.

RYMAN LEAGUE: Premier division: Purfleet 1 Sutton United 3. **Puma Cup: Second round:** Boreham Wood 1 Canvey Island 1.

DR MARTENS LEAGUE CUP: Second-round replay: Weymouth 1 Bashley 3.

FA CARLSBERG VASE: Third round: Bowers United 4 Diss Town 0.

AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION: First division: Luton 3 Tottenham 0.

PONTIN'S LEAGUE CUP: Group two: Barnsley 1 York 2. **Group three:** Manchester City 0 West Bromwich 0.

FA PREMIER ACADEMY LEAGUE: Under-17: Liverpool 2 Manchester City 2.

ICE HOCKEY

NATIONAL LEAGUE (NHL): Boston 3 Tampa Bay 2, Carolina 1 Buffalo 4; Montreal 2 Dallas 2; Toronto 7 Pittsburgh 1; Anaheim 2 Colorado 4.

RUGBY UNION

CHALLENGE TROPHY DRAW: Pool A: Aberavon, Caerphilly, Neath, Pontypridd, Canada, Edinburgh Reivers, Namibia, Natal Wildebeest. **Pool B:** Bridgend, Ebbw Vale, Llanelli, Newport, Blue Bulls, Gauteng Falcons, Glasgow Caledonians, Romania.

☐ Trophy begins on January 8.

SAILING

SYDNEY INTERNATIONAL REGATTA: Provisional final overall positions (after four days): **Sailing class** (after five races, one discard): 1, A Beadsworth, B Pullin and R Sydenham (GB) 11pts; 2, N Whitby, D Edwards and J Grose (Aus) 13, 3, I Walker, N Drennen and S Jackson (Aus) 18, 4, L Smith, O Stewart and R Cruickshank (GB) 20. **Laser class** (after six races, one discard): 1, B Ainslie (GB) 11; 2, R Scheidt (Br) 12; 3, M Blackburn (Aus) 15. **Other British placings:** 5, P Goodison 25, 31, A Simpson 74; 37, J Taylor 92; 49, M Barron 107, 58, E Wright 123. **Flian class** (after seven races, two discards): 1, F Looi (Swe) 29, 2, M Kuszniarewicz (Pol) 35; 3, X Rohart (Fr) 48. **British placings:** 4, I Percy 56, 11, R Stenhouse 103; 14, D Mellor 109; 15, J Lea 116. **49er class** (after four races): 1, A Beashel and T Czaloucka (Aus), 2, C Nicholson and E Smyth (Aus); 3, M Larson and K Hall (US). **British placings:** 7, A and I Burgess 10, P Brotherton and N McDonald; 11, A Stead and Z Elliot; 18, T Robinson and I Walker; 19, I Barker and D Phillips. **Europe class** (after three races): 1, C Brouwer (Holl) 13; 2, S Blanck (Aus) 21, 3, M Coleman (Ire) 27. **British placings:** 14, J Singleton 49, 24, D Winstanley 69. **470 women** (after 12 races; two discards): 1, R Terari and E Pacholchik (Ukr) 43; 2, N Barkner and W Buelle (Ger) 57; 3, F Saika and E Sosa (Ih 62. **British placings:** 12, S Rees Jones and I Leask 115; 16, K Nunon and B Watson 139. **17**, B Raggatt and S Webb 140. **23**, L Walker and S Parker 183, 32, H Lucas and M Beech 258.

CLIPPER RTW RACE: Leg 2C (Panama to Galapagos). **Positions** (with miles to finish): 1, Antrope 443; 2, Ariel 445; 3, Thermopylae 466, 4; Taeping 476, 5, Serica 490; 6, Chrysalis 510; 7, Murmure 520.

SQUASH

NATIONAL SRA RANKINGS: Men: 1, P Johnson (Kent), 2, S Parke (Yorkshire), 3, N Taylor (Lancashire); 4, C Walker (Essex), 5, M Cairns (Oxfordshire); 6, T Hands (Essex); 7, T Garner (Sussex); 8, D Hems (Essex), 9, S Meads (Berkshire); 10, L Beachill (Yorks). **Women:** 1, C Jackman (Norfolk); 2, S Wright (Kent), 3, J Mellor (Northumbria), 4, S Horner (Yorkshire); 5, L Charman (Sussex), 6, F Geaves (Gloucester); 7, S Bond (Kent), 8, J Trenfield (Yorkshire); 9, R Macrae (Essex); 10, A Wray (Yorkshire).

TENNIS

QUEENS CLUB, London: British WTA Christmas Singles: Quarter-finals: K Warne-Holland (Dorset) bt N Woodhouse (Norfolk) 6-1; 6-1; C Taylor (Oxon) bt H Collin (Surrey) 6-4, 6-7, 6-3; J Osman (Sussex) bt H Cook (Essex) 6-8, 7-6, L Jelfs (Oxon) bt J White (Northants) 6-0, 6-0. **Semi-finals:** Taylor bt Warne-Holland 6-4, 6-4; Jelfs bt Osman 6-1, 6-3.

FIXTURES

FOOTBALL

DR MARTENS LEAGUE CUP: Second round: Racing Club Warwick v Sutton Coldfield Town (7.30).

RYMAN LEAGUE: Puma Cup: Second round: Berkhamsted v Aylesbury (7.30).

CALOR COUNTY ANTRIM SHIELD: Quarter-final: Dungannon Swifts v Distillery (7.30).

RUGBY UNION

Cheltenham and Gloucester Cup First round, second leg

Orrell (3) v Sale (70) (7 16).....

OTHER SPORT

BASKETBALL: Uni-ball Trophy: Pool stage: Derby Storm v Chester Jets (8.0).

ICE HOCKEY: Superleague: London Knights v Bracknell Bees (7.0).

IN BRIEF

Sailor gets back in the old routine

■ **RUGBY LEAGUE:** Wendell Sailor, the Australia rugby league player, will make his first appearance for Leeds Rhinos in the Christmas Challenge match against Halifax at Headingley on Boxing Day. Sailor, who has scored 11 tries in nine matches playing as an amateur for the Rhinos' sister rugby union team, Leeds Tykes, will line up on the right wing as he prepares to resume his league-playing career over the holiday.

■ **TENNIS:** Lizzie Jelfs, the second seed and former British No 1, and Claire Taylor, will meet in the final of the British Women's Tennis Association Christmas singles at Queen's Club.

■ **SKIING:** Jean-Luc Cretier, 32, the Olympic gold medal-winner, has not ruled out a return to racing despite suffering a serious knee injury at Val Gardena at the weekend. The Frenchman, who has a fractured wrist and torn cruciate knee ligaments, will be out for the rest of the season.

LEGAL & PUBLIC NOTICES 0171-782 7344

PUBLIC NOTICES

PETROLEUM AND SUBMARINE PIPELINES ACT 1975

Notice of Application for a Submarine Pipe-line Works Authorisation

Burlington Resources (Irish Sea) Limited as operator, on behalf of Alliance Resources (co-licensees) hereby gives notice in accordance with the provisions of Part 1 of Schedule 4 to the Petroleum and Submarine Pipe-lines Act 1975 that it has made an application to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry for the grant of an authorisation for the construction and use of a system of pipe-lines between the Dalton and Millom East fields and the North Morecambe field.

A map delineating the route of the proposed pipe-lines and providing certain further information may be inspected free of charge at the places listed in the Schedule to this notice from 10am to 4pm on each weekday from the date that this notice is published until the date mentioned in the next paragraph of this notice.

Persons to a direction of the Secretary of State, representations with respect to the application may be made in writing and addressed to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry at the Oil and Gas Office, Athol House, 86-88 Guild Street, Aberdeen, AB11 6AR (marked PAD Mr. I. Furneaux, Offshore Pipeline Authorisations) not later than 21 January 1999 and should bear the reference "ABE 10/1/Dalton & Millom" and state the grounds upon which the representations are made.

Dated: General Manager
Earl Reynolds

BURLINGTON RESOURCES (IRISH SEA) Ltd
One Canada Square
Canary Wharf, London E14 5AA

See Schedule;

SCHEDULE TO THE NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION
PLACES AT WHERE THE MAP MAY BE INSPECTED

Burlington Resources (Irish Sea) Ltd
One Canada Square
Canary Wharf, London E14 5AA

National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations
Marsden Road, Fish Docks,
Grimsby, North East Lincs DN31 3SG

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Fisheries Office,
Old Harbour, The Quay
Poole, Dorset BH15 1HP

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Fisheries Office,
Estuary House, 1 Cliffe Road
Grimsby, North East Lincs DN31 3QL

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Fisheries Office,
26 London Street, Fleetwood
Lancashire, FY7 7JG

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Fisheries Office,
Bields Chambers, 2 Wimerey Road
Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 1BN

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Fisheries Office,
Neville House, Central Riverside
Bell Street, North Shields
Tyne & Wear NE30 1LJ

Department of Trade & Industry
Oil and Gas Office, 4th Floor, Atholl House
86-88 Guild Street, Aberdeen AB11 6AR

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Fisheries Office,
The Old Vicarage, Newry Street,
Holyhead, Gwynedd LL65 1DB

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Fisheries Office,
Fish Quay, Sutton Harbour
Plymouth, PL4 0LH

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Fisheries Office,
46 Fore Street, Newlyn
Penzance TR18 5JR

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Fisheries Office,
Fish Market, Rock-a-Nore Road
Hastings, East Sussex TN34 3DW

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Fisheries Office,
4/5 Hamilton Terrace, Milford Haven
Dyfed, SA73 2AL

LEGAL NOTICES

No 004863 of 1998
IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
CHANCERY DIVISION
IN THE MATTER OF TSB LIFE LIMITED
and
IN THE MATTER OF TSB PENSIONS LIMITED
and
IN THE MATTER OF LLOYDS TSB LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED
and
IN THE MATTER OF THE INSURANCE COMPANIES ACT 1982

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that an Order under Part 1 of Schedule 2C to the Insurance Companies Act 1982 (as amended), sanctioning a scheme for the transfer (the Transfer) to Lloyds TSB Life Assurance Company Limited of the whole of the long term insurance business carried on by each of TSB Life Limited and TSB Pensions Limited and making provision for related matters in accordance with paragraph 5 of the said Part 1, was made by Her Majesty's High Court of Justice on 30 November 1998. It is expected that the Transfer will become effective in accordance with the said Order on 31 December 1998.

23 December 1998

Linklaters & Paines (Ref: MYC/SN828), One Silk Street, London EC2Y 8HQ

Solicitors for TSB Life Limited, TSB Pensions Limited and Lloyds TSB Life Assurance Company Limited

THE CAR GROUP PLC (IN ADMINISTRATIVE RECEIVERSHIP)
NOTICE TO CREDITORS

A meeting of the creditors of The Car Group plc is to be held at the offices of Price waterhouse Coopers, No 1 London Bridge, London on 21 January 1999 at 10 am under the provisions of Section 48 of the Insolvency Act 1986. The purpose of this meeting is to receive the report of the receivers and if the creditors wish to do so, to appoint a committee of creditors.

Creditors who have not received notice of the meeting and wish to attend should contact the receivers' office (telephone number 0171 939 3000) and ask for Ashley Miller.

Creditors whose claims are wholly secured are not entitled to attend or be represented at the meeting.

A J Barrett
Joint Administrative Receiver
17 December 1998

IN THE MATTER OF HARTLEY BUSINESS CENTRE LIMITED - COMPANY NUMBER 3254716

Nature of Business - Warehouse and Storage Facilities
Administration Order Made 14 December 1998
Date 17 December 1998
David Hiskes
Administrator
Cannon Beckman & Partners
3 Dyers Buildings
Holborn
London EC1N 2JT

SHELDON INVESTMENT COMPANY LIMITED (IN MEMBERS' VOLUNTARY LIQUIDATION)
Company number: 1092867
NOTICE TO CREDITORS OF Sheldon Investment Company Limited
On 10 December 1998 the company was placed in members' voluntary liquidation and David John Blenkarn of Price waterhouse Coopers was appointed liquidator by the shareholders.
The liquidator gives notice under the provisions of Rule 4.182A of the Insolvency Rules 1986, that the creditors of the company must send details, in writing, of any claim against the company to the liquidator, at The Quay, 20 Channel Way, Ocean Village, Southampton, SO14 3QG by 12 February 1999 which is the last day for proving claims. The liquidator also gives notice that he will then make a final distribution to creditors and that a creditor who does not make a claim by the date mentioned will not be included in the distribution.
The company is able to pay all its known creditors in full.
Date: 16 December 1998
D J Blenkarn
Liquidator

No. 5720 of 1998
IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
CHANCERY DIVISION
COMPANIES COURT
IN THE MATTER OF POWERGEN PLC
and
IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 1985

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Order of the High Court of Justice (Chancery Division) dated 14 December 1998 confirming the reduction of the capital of the above-named Company from £999,420,924.50 to £525,000,001 and the Minute approved by the Court showing with respect to the capital of the Company as altered the several particulars required by the above-mentioned Act were registered by the Registrar of Companies on 15 December 1998.
Dated this 23 day of December 1998

LEGAL, PUBLIC, COMPANY & PARLIAMENTARY NOTICES
TO PLACE NOTICES FOR THESE SECTIONS PLEASE:
Telephone 0171 680 6878
Fax 0171 782 7930
Or Email tnl.fashnotes@newsint.co.uk
Notices are subject to confirmation and should be received by 2.30pm two days prior to insertion.

LEGAL NOTICES

ARTHRELL, Cyril William Alexander Arthrell otherwise Cyril William Arthrell late of Hoo, Rochester, Kent died there on 18 July 1998 (Estate about £20,000)

ASPELL, Anthony Thomas Aspell, Batchelor late of Hackney, London E8 died there on or about 19 May 1998 (Estate about £1,500)

BESTFORD, John Bestford late of Leeds, West Yorkshire died there on 15 March 1998 (Estate about £7,000)

BING, nee DANN, Josie Elsie Bing nee DANN, Widow late of Gillingham, Kent died there on 15 April 1998 (Estate about £18,000)

BOARD nee LENSSEN, Georgie Board nee Lenssen, Widow late of Forest Gate, London E7 died there on 8 April 1997 (Estate about £35,000)

BOURKE, Leslie James Bourke late of Bournemouth, Dorset died there on 28 January 1996 (Estate about £14,000)

BOWDEN formerly Collingwood nee Bland, Dorothy Bowden formerly Collingwood nee Bland, Widow late of Loughborough, Leicestershire died there on 29 April 1997 (Estate about £6,000)

BUTLER, Donald Graham Butler late of Hove, East Sussex died at Brighton, East Sussex on 4 November 1996 (Estate about £35,000)

CLARKE, Raymond Thomas Clarke otherwise Raymond Clarke late of Brixton, London SW2 died at Lambeth, London SE11 on 25 April 1997 (Estate about £10,000)

DEANER, John Thomas Sherwood Deaner late of Northampton, Northamptonshire died there on 21 November 1997 (Estate about £5,500)

FARMY nee Smith, Elsie Gertrude Farmy otherwise Truda Farmy nee Smith, a married woman late of Westcliff on Sea, Essex died there on 18 March 1998 (Estate about £50,000)

FOSTER, Frederick Foster otherwise Frederick Thomas Foster late of Southsea, Hampshire died at Gosport, Hampshire on 13 July 1998 (Estate about £20,500)

GARDINER, Arthur Gardner otherwise Arthur Edgar Gardiner late of Kilburn, London NW6 died at Kensington, London W8 on 8 October 1997 (Estate about £5,000)

GROOM, Janet Groom, Widow late of Ewell Court, London SW5 died Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset on 27 May 1998 (Estate about £10,000)

GWINNETT, Joyce Ann Gwinnett, Spinster late of Exeter, Devon died there on 24 June 1998 (Estate about £26,000)

MASON nee Job, Marjorie Mason nee Job, Widow late of Plymouth, Devon died there on 12 January 1991 (Estate about £5,000)

MOSS nee Bell, Annie Moss otherwise Beckom Moss otherwise Annie Bell Moss nee Bell, Single woman late of Twickenham, Middlesex died at Isleworth, Middlesex on 6 August 1998 (Estate about £20,000)

O'DELL, Hilda Renee O'Dell otherwise Hilda O'Dell, Spinster late of Edgware, Middlesex died at Harrow, Middlesex on 29 September 1997 (Estate about £54,000)

OSBORNE, Edgar Ronald Osborne late of Walsall, West Midlands died there on 7 January 1998 (Estate about £15,000)

PARKER nee Mowl, Jessie Lilian Parker nee Mowl, Widow late of Hailsham, East Sussex died at Eastbourne, East Sussex on 19 March 1993 (Estate about £50,000)

REEKS, Pamela Evelina Reeks otherwise Pamela Evelyn Reeks, Spinster late of Harwich, Essex died there on 17 May 1998 (Estate about £70,000)

REPPEL, Jack Pepper late of Westminster, London SW1 died there on 10 June 1992 (Estate about £5,000)

STORR, Samuel Brook late of Sheffield, South Yorkshire died there on 17 February 1988 (Estate about £200,000)

SZAFRAN, Bronislaw Szafran otherwise Bruno Szafran late of Ilford, Essex died there on 22 September 1996 (Estate about £80,000)

TEMBLETT, Evelyn Tembleet, Spinster late of Bristol, Avon died there on 29 June 1998 (Estate about £10,000)

WILLIAMS, Thomas Williams late of Sherbrook Hill, Durham died there on 18 October 1998 (Estate about £85,000)

The Widow/Widower and Kin of the above named are requested to apply to the Treasury Solicitor (A.V.), Queen Anne's Chambers, 28 Broadway, London SW1H 9JS, failing which the Treasury Solicitor may take steps to administer the estate.

TOBIAS HOSTEDTCH LONDON LIMITED
(IN LIQUIDATION)
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to the Insolvency Rules 1986, that the Joint Liquidators of the above named Company intend to declare and distribute a first interim dividend to creditors within the period of four months from the last date for proving mentioned below. Every person claiming to be a creditor of the above named Company is required, on or before 22 January 1999, which is the last date for proving, to submit his proof of debt to the Joint Liquidators of the above named Company at Benedict McGowan, 62 Wilson Street, London EC2A 2BU and, if so requested, to provide such further details or produce such documentary or other evidence as may appear to the Liquidators to be necessary. A creditor who has not proved his debt before the last date for proving mentioned above is not entitled to disturb, by reason that he has not participated in the dividend, the distribution of that dividend or any other dividend declared before his debt is proved.
Dated this 18 day of December 1998
Ian Donald Williams
Joint Liquidator

No. 5720 of 1998
IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
CHANCERY DIVISION
COMPANIES COURT
IN THE MATTER OF POWERGEN PLC
and
IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 1985

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Order of the High Court of Justice (Chancery Division) dated 7 December 1998 confirming the reduction of the capital of the above-named Company from £525,000,001 to £200,453,234.50 and sanctioning a scheme of arrangement as a consequence of which the capital of the above-named Company was thereafter increased to £999,420,924.50 and the Minute approved by the Court showing with respect to the capital of the Company as altered the several particulars required by the above-mentioned Act were registered by the Registrar of Companies on 9 December 1998.
Dated this 23 day of December 1998.

IN THE MATTER OF HEXCEL COMPOSITES LIMITED
AND
IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 1985

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a Petition was on 1 December 1998 presented to Her Majesty's High Court of Justice for the confirmation of the reduction of the share capital of the above named Company from £60,000,000 and US $20,000 to £45,392,000 and US $20,000 by the cancellation of 14,608,000 deferred shares of £1.

AND NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that the said Petition is directed to be heard before the Companies Court Registrar at the Royal Courts of Justice, The Strand, London WC2A 2LL, on Wednesday, 20 January 1999

Any Creditor of Shareholder of the said Company desiring to oppose the making of an Order for the reduction of the said share capital should appear at the time of hearing in person or by Counsel for that purpose.

A copy of the said Petition will be furnished to any such person requiring the same by the undermentioned Solicitors on payment of the regulated charge for the same.

Dated 23 December 1998
Baker & McKenzie
100 New Bridge Street
London
EC4V 6JA
Tel: 0171 919 1000
Ref: PJK/CCN/SJF
Solicitors for the above named Company

Power at root of sporting evil

SIMON BARNES



Midweek View

Sport is a manifestly trivial pursuit: why, then, do we spend so much time on it? Why do we watch it at all? There were 23.8 million of us watching the England v Argentina football match on television; we could have been disaster-planning for the nuclear winter, praying, reading Wittgenstein, collecting money for charity, writing poetry, listening to the Goldberg Variations, discovering a new species of rainforest beetle or educating our children in the ways of righteousness and peace.

But no, vast numbers of us preferred to spend damn near three hours of our lives watching men in shorts kicking a bladder and, occasionally, each other. And, of course, it was a wonderful and unforgettable night. But all the same, why did we bother? It mattered not a jot.

But, of course, the triviality is part of the point. We turn away from the absorbing problems of our own lives and the disturbing events of public life into a world of simplicity and beauty and breathless excitement. There is an innocence in our pleasure in sport. In the finest moments of sport, we grown-ups are always ready to make that willing suspension of our hard-won cynicism. This is the matter that constitutes sporting faith and it is what makes sporting pleasure possible.

> 'There is innocence in our pleasure'

It is a rare and important pleasure. We turn away from such things as the overdraft and our personal responsibility for the war in Iraq, to matters of such crushing non-importance as whether Graeme Hick can come good at last, whether David Platt can manage an Italian football team and whether Teeton Mill can win the King George.

And, as ever, we turn from the front end of the newspaper, and its usual tales of the corruption of presidents and the death of innocents, to the back to see whether Aston Villa can hold on to the top place and England can hold onto the bottom. It may not set the world back in perspective, but at least it cheers you up.

But alas, we read further. And we find, amid our pages of innocent victory and innocent defeat, tale after tale of corruption and criminality.

The Football Association is in trouble for its attempt to buy power. The International Olympic Committee is surrounded by stories of bribes. Australian cricketers have been taking money from bookmakers.

And always waiting for us is the latest drug story — from the Chinese caught with phials of human growth hormone, through to the mad drugs busts of the Tour de France, and on to the death, at 38, of the great Flo-Jo, allegedly the result of a sporting lifetime of drug-taking.

It is all a strange paradox. We turn to sport because it answers the need of something innocent in ourselves. Sport is a childlike pleasure: all the richer for that reason. And we are prepared to pay good money for these very real delights. And there's the rub.

Because of our willingness to pay for our small and innocent pleasures, we have made sport mind-bogglingly rich. Look at the money paid for the television rights to the Olympic Games, the World Cup, the National Basketball Association or the Premier League.

> 'Sport has inevitably become corrupt'

There is also the little matter of power, which is different from mere money. The world's innocent love of sport makes for the world's constant demand for sport. Massive demand gives great power to the hands of the suppliers — a fact they know equally well in Medellin and Wall Street.

And wherever you get money and power you get temptation. Humankind, in general, can resist anything except temptation. Thus sport has become more beautiful and more accessible than ever before, richer and more powerful, and, quite inevitably, more corrupt.

We don't really want to know about the nasty things in sport's woodshed, but we cannot dodge them. And each tale of corruption destroys just a tiny bit of our innocent pleasure in sport and corrodes just a little of our sporting faith.

Sport's great success has a tendency to destroy the reason for its success: that is to say, our own naive and innocent pleasure. Innocence has destroyed innocence.

There is, at the moment, no stopping the march of sport to more money, wider popularity, greater power. But it does so at the expense of its own innocence and, ultimately, at the expense of the innocent pleasure of its audience: the people who ultimately pay.

For it is our own innocent pleasure that makes professional sport possible. Sport, by raising itself to such heights of fruition, has planted the seeds of its own destruction.

CRICKET

England's hapless bowlers cut to ribbons

FROM ALAN LEE, CRICKET CORRESPONDENT IN HOBART

HOBART (final day of four): Australian XI beat England XI by nine wickets

STANDARDS of English bowling have been in decline for many years but a numbing nadir was discovered yesterday in a performance that will be mocked all around Australia. Recent England teams have made a habit of winning when it no longer matters but the bankruptcy of yesterday's cricket offers no encouragement to stay up late for the two holiday Test matches.

The bare facts of a sunny day on the shores of Tasmania are that England set a target of 376 and lost in the 56th of the available 78 overs. They took only one wicket and did not bowl a single maiden over as a game subjected to three declarations in an attempt to create a close finish ended half an hour after tea in a rout. Long before that, England were a servile shambles, their bowling reduced to cannon-fodder, their approach to fatalism.

England's points of defence are that the Hobart pitch remained obstinately benign, Michael Atherton's declaration rescued the game from oblivion and Greg Blewett batted like a man who feels immortal.

The prosecution, though, will be heard longer and louder, not least because Graham Gooch, the tour manager, emerged afterwards with a face like thunder and a voice heavy with despair.

While paying due credit to the remarkable exploits of Blewett, who took his aggregate runs in the game to 382 without being out, Gooch was distressed by his own helplessness amid such ineptitude. "It's the players who have to show pride," he said.

This is a tour that continues to uncover new and startling deficiencies just when it seems things could not possibly get worse. For all the optimism that survived the early weeks, England have won only one first-class match — through an improbable last-wicket partnership — and have been thrashed in their last three.

Even Blewett, whose serene form makes it daily more astonishing that he cannot regain his place in the Test team, spoke with polite surprise about the inadequacy of the English bowling. "Once we were on top, I thought they'd bowl some one-day stuff, really full length, but they were a bit both sides of the wicket."

Blewett, who was on the field throughout the game, did not have long to wait yesterday to start his second innings. Atherton declared ten overs into the morning, as soon as Mark Butcher had completed a largely meaningless century against part-time bowlers.

England's match aggregate was 668 for nine, so they did rather better than the West Indians of two years ago, who lost the corresponding match here by an innings after twice being dismissed cheaply. The West Indies, however, did not have the dubious benefit of three opposition bowlers immobilised by injury.

Had Atherton asked much more of the Australians, he would have stood accused of killing the game; as it was, his bowlers ensured that the asking rate of almost five runs an over looked hopelessly generous. By lunch, from 18 overs, the Australians had cut 124 from the target for the loss of Matthew Elliott, who was bowled off his body as he tried to pull Alex Tudor. At 31 for one, England had a scent of hope. Soon, it was the smell of two smoking barrels as Blewett and Corey Richards amassed 197 in the two-hour afternoon session.

The runs came without overt risk-taking, in itself a condemnation of the quality of bowling. England bowled wide and wild and Atherton was soon reduced to setting fields without a slip for the seam bowlers. The one semblance of a chance, a pull by Blewett off Hollioake when 136, was misjudged by Cork at deep square leg. No one was better than innocuous and Peter Such was alarmingly compliant.

Richards, whose elevation to representative cricket had begun with a second-ball nought, seized on his second chance to make his fifth hundred of the season. Blewett's was his sixth, the last four in successive innings, and in the process he became only the sixth Australian to achieve 1,000 first-class runs before the end of December.

In three innings against England on this tour, Blewett has totalled 525 runs and been out only once. "I feel," he said later, with heavy understatement, "I've got a bit of momentum together." With an unbeaten double-century, an unbroken stand of 345 and a match aggregate of 1,337 runs at an average of 95 per wicket, this was a statistical utopia. Figures to make the head spin or, for England, the hands wring.

STU FORSTER / ALLSPORT



Richards, Blewett's partner in a stand of 345, flicks a ball from Tudor to the ropes

IAN WALDIE



Atherton leads a downcast England side from the field

SCOREBOARD

ENGLAND XI: First Innings 469 for 8 dec (M A Atherton 210 not out, G A Hick 125, M R Ramprakash 65).

Second Innings

M A Butcher not out	103
J P Crawley lbw b Lehmann	63
B C Hollioake c Blewett b Elliott	17
D G Cork run out	10
†W K Hegg not out	5
Extras (nb 1)	1
Total (3 wkts dec)	**199**

FALL OF WICKETS: 1-118, 2-164, 3-190.
BOWLING: Julian 11-2-43-0; Law 8-1-36-0; Lehmann 7.5-1-48-1; Bevan 15-1-57-0; Elliott 5-0-15-1

AUSTRALIA XI: First Innings 393 for 4 dec (G S Blewett 169 not out, M T G Elliott 81).

Second Innings

G S Blewett not out	213
M T G Elliott b Tudor	8
C J Richards not out	138
Extras (b 5, lb 4, w 3, nb 5)	17
Total (1 wkt)	**376**

FALL OF WICKET: 1-31
BOWLING: Tudor 9-0-49-1; Fraser 11-0-72-0; Such 11-0-86-0; Cork 12.2-0-76-0; Hick 3-0-22-0; Hollioake 5-0-45-0; Ramprakash 4-0-17-0
Umpires: S G Davies and P D Parker.

Answers from page 31

CHILIASM
(a) Early chronological speculation based on millennia. It occurs in Zoroastrianism and in Greek and Roman writers.
CONULATA
(a) Steep-sided pyramidical fossils with a chitinophosphatic test or shell, characteristically marked by five transverse growth ridges. The section is usually square or rhomboid, and internal septa may be present. Found in Cambrian-Triassic.
SPICA
(c) A spiral figure-of-eight bandage. It is so called because it looks like an ear of barley. It is useful for application to anatomical features of different dimensions, eg thumb and hand.
MILLSCALE
(b) Flakes of iron oxide on the surface of heated or hot-worked steel. It can lead to serious blemishes in the surface of steel.

SOLUTION TO WINNING MOVE
1 ...Ra1+!; 2 Qxa1 Rh1+ wins

TELEVISION CHOICE

Medieval murder mystery

Cadfael: The Potter's Field
ITV, 9.00pm

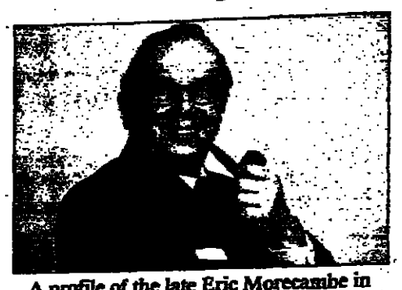
The first of two cases over Christmas for the Medieval sleuth has Derek Jacobi's Brother Cadfael investigating the death of a young woman whose remains are discovered in a ploughed field. Murders tend to be Cadfael's business but the woman has no marks on her and it is unclear how she met her death. That she disappeared a year before adds a further twist. Adapted from the Ellis Peters novel by Christopher Russell (a frequent writing credit on *A Touch of Frost*), *The Potter's Field* is typical of the *Cadfael* cycle in taking a leisurely course through events and only gathering pace when the denouement is imminent. But the quiet and thoughtful nature of the story constitutes much of the enjoyment.

The Confrontation
Channel 4, 9.00pm

Penny is a working mother with three daughters and a partner who is an alcoholic. Brian's binge drinking causes him to leave home and live on the streets, often for months on end, and has caused great distress to the family. When Brian leaves home yet again Penny decides that after ten years of misery she has had enough. She gives his clothes to Oxfam and resigns herself to living without him. Then she hears about an American treatment called Intervention, which involves the drinker being confronted unexpectedly by his family and given a final ultimatum. The film follows Penny and the girls as first they undertake counselling and then make an emotional appeal to Brian to mend his ways. It is a last chance. All concerned, not least Brian, know that if it does not work, drink will probably finish him.

Bring Me Sunshine
BBC1, 9.30pm

For a large slice of the population, 28 million at the peak, the highlight of Christmas was watching the Morecambe and Wise show on television. Many would say that the festive season has not been the same since. So it is appropriate this week that we should be celebrating Eric Morecambe, though *Bring Me Sunshine* is not the profile we might expect. There is the obligatory reminder of Angela Rippon's legs and other golden moments, but the film is more about the man than the performer and dwells particularly on the heart attacks which eventually ended his life. Significantly, the interviewees include the heart surgeon Professor Magdi Yacoub but not Ernie Wise. From the testimony of friends and close family, Morecambe emerges as a compulsivie worrier who drove himself relentlessly for his craft. Joan, his widow, says showbusiness killed him.



A profile of the late Eric Morecambe in Bring Me Sunshine (BBC1, 9.30pm)

The Things You Do For Love
ITV, 10.55pm

Kay Mellor of *Band of Gold* has dramatised this true love story, which unusually for this series does not involve famous people. Not that the story of Joan and Joe is any less compelling. They met after the war when she was a shorthand typist in Gateshead and he was in the area on a course. Although she looked older, she was not yet 16 and he was 27. The age difference meant nothing to them but was seized upon by her disapproving mother. He returned home to Carlisle and she married another man. All this is told in flashback as, 40 years on, Joan is spurred on by recurring dreams to find Joe again. Mellor undercuts the sentimentality implicit in the story with a sharp eye for social detail and there are strong performances by Anne Stallybrass and Gillian Kearney as the older and younger Joan.

Peter Waymark

RADIO CHOICE

Classic Toys
Radio 4, 11.00am

I met someone a few days ago who was planning to queue all night outside a store in order to get an in-demand toy, the only problem being that if the local newspaper published a picture of the queue and her daughter saw it . . . You will guess from the above that I have given up resisting Christmas, which means I have surrendered to Christmas programming. This one is either amusing or depressing, depending on whether you think the fact that Barbie has outsold Sindy is a statistic that matters. Emma Freud's purpose here is to discover whether it is children's preferences rather than relentless marketing that decides the popularity of a toy, a matter of interest to parents worried that they are tacit accessories to brainwashing.

Nick Barraclough's New Country Christmas
Radio 2, 7.00pm

This promises to be an amusing hour, for it has Barraclough sweltering in Nashville during the summer listening to stars recording their Christmas songs. Dwight Yoakam and Suzy Bogguss will be familiar names to country music fans and indeed their Christmas CDs are already in the country charts. But this being America there is more to the Christmas music trade than serious singers singing about bells and new-born babies. There is also the flip side, so to speak, which this year includes a particular focus on songs about right-wing southerners. I have every hope of getting through Christmas without hearing *Leroy the Redneck Reindeer* but be sure that somebody out there has actually bought it.

Peter Barnard

RADIO 1 (BBC)

6.30am Chris Moyles 9.00 Simon Mayo 12.00 Kevin Greening 2.00pm Mark Radcliffe 4.00 Dave Pearce 8.00 The Evening Session 98. Concluding the music review 10.00 John Peel 12.00 Giles Peterson 2.00am Emma B 4.00 Scott Mills

RADIO 2 (BBC)

6.00am Alex Lester 7.30 Wake Up to Wogan 9.30 Ken Bruce 12.00 Jimmy Young 2.00pm Ed Stewart 5.05 Johnnie Walker 7.00 Nick Barraclough's New Country Christmas. See Choice 8.00 Mike Harding 9.00 The Andy Peebles Soul Show (5/13) 10.00 Richard Allinson 11.45 Following My Star 12.00 Katrina Leskanich 3.00am Mo Dutta

RADIO 5 LIVE (BBC)

5.00am Morning Reports 6.00 Breakfast 9.00 Brian Hayes 12.00 The Midday News 1.00pm Russoe and Co 4.00 Drive with Peter Allen and Jane Garvey 7.00 News Extra with David McNeil 7.30 The Life and Death of Belfast Celtic 8.00 Any Sporting Questions. John Inverdale hosts the debate from Portsmouth 10.00 Late Night Live 1.00am Up All Night 4.00 Extra Time. Mark Steel, Lou Macari, Sammy Nelson and Brian Talbot discuss the 1979 FA Cup Final between Arsenal and Manchester United (r)

VIRGIN

6.00am Jeremy Clark 9.30 Russ Williams 1.00pm Nick Abbot 4.00 Harriet Scott 6.45 Janey Lee Grace 10.00 James Merritz 2.00am Richard Allen

TALK RADIO

6.00am Bill Overton & Sally Meen 9.00 Scott Chisholm 12.00pm Lorraine Kelly 2.00 Anna Raeburn 4.00 Peter Deeley 5.00 The Sports Zone 8.00 Mike Allen 1.00am Gordon Astley

BBC WORLD SERVICE

5.00am The World Today 7.00 News 7.15 Off the Shelf: Christmastime at the End Of the Road 7.30 Meridian Live 8.00 News 8.10 Pause for Thought 8.15 Westway 8.30 Everywoman 9.00 News; (648 only) News in German 9.05 World Business Report 9.15 The Farming World 9.30 Britain Now 9.45 Sports Round-Up 10.00 Newsdesk 10.30 One Planet 11.00 Newsdesk 11.30 Sports International 12.00 News 12.05pm World Business Report 12.15 Britain Today 12.30 Global Wildlife 12.45 Sports Round-Up 1.00 Newshour 2.00 News 2.05 Outlook 2.30 Megamix 3.00 News; (648 only) News in German 3.05 Sports Round-Up 3.15 Performance 3.30 Everywoman 4.00 News 4.15 From Our Own Correspondent 4.30 Insight; (648 only) News in German 4.45 Britain Today 5.00 Europe Today 5.30 World Business Report 5.45 Sports Round-Up 6.00 Newsdesk 6.30 The Works; (648 only) News in German 7.00 Newsdesk 7.30 Outlook 7.45 Pause For Thought 7.50 Multitrack X-Press 8.00 Newshour 9.00 News 9.05 World Business Report 9.15 Britain Today 9.30 On Screen 10.00 Newsdesk 10.30 Insight 10.45 Sports Round-Up 11.00 News 11.05 Outlook 11.30 Multitrack X-Press 12.00 Newsdesk 12.30am From Our Own Correspondent 12.45 Britain Today 1.00 Newsdesk 1.30 Omnibus 2.00 Newsday 2.30 Meridian Books 3.00 News 3.05 World Business Report 3.15 Sports Round-Up 3.30 Foul Play 4.00 The World Today

CLASSIC FM

6.00am Nick Bailey's Easier Breakfast 8.00 Henry Kelly The Hall of Fame Hour and Record of the Week, plus favourite carols chosen by listeners 12.00 Lunchtime Requests 2.00pm Concerto. Saint-Saens: Carnival of the Animals 3.00 Jamie Crick. Continuous Classics and Afternoon Romance 6.30 Newsnight. Headlines, arts news and guests, presented by John Brunning 7.00 Smooth Classics at Seven. John Brunning introduces easy-listening sounds 9.00 Evening Concert. Pasche (Christmas Mass in F major); Jim Parker (Concerto for Clarinet and Strings); Holst (The Hymn of Jesus); Britten (A Ceremony of Carols) 11.00 Mann at Night 2.00am Concerto (r) 3.00 Mark Griffiths with the Early Breakfast Show.

RADIO 3

6.00am On Air with Petroc Trelawny
9.00 Masterworks with Peter Hobday
10.30 Artist of the Week: Roger Norrington (r)
11.00 Sound Stories: The Christmas Story Richard Baker tells the story of the shepherds
12.00 Composer of the Week: Bizet
1.00pm The Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert (r)
2.00 The BBC Orchestras BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under Jerzy Maksymiuk
4.00 Choral Evensong Live from Lichfield Cathedral
5.00 A Medieval Christmas A ten-part collection of music for Christmas past and present
5.30 Music Rooms Natalie Wheen visits the the Cambridgeshire countryside (3/10)
6.00 Discovering Music with Leonard Slatkin (3/10)
7.00 Christmas Cocktails Dance band music of wartime romance recorded in Britain and America during the Second World War (3/5)
7.30 Performance on 3 Prom 68, given on September 8. Raphael Oleg, violin, Czech Philharmonic Orchestra under Libor Pesek. Dvorak (Overture: My Home); Szymanowski (Violin Concerto No 1); Brahms (Symphony No 1 in C minor) (r)
9.10 Postscript: Rainer Hersch's 20th-Century Retrospective (3/5)
9.30 Beethoven and Mozart Quintets Bruno Giuranna, viola, joins the Endellion Quartet for a recital of string quintets
10.45 Book, Music and Lyrics Robert Cushman presents a personal view of musicals (2/6)
11.30 Jazz Notes Alyn Shipton presents the second part of Harry Edison in concert with Red Holloway and the Colin Purbrook Trio in 1996
12.00 Composer of the Week: Bach (r).
1.00am Through the Night with Donald Macleod. Includes 1.00 Bohemian Organs

RADIO 4

5.30am World News 5.35 Shipping Forecast
5.40 Inshore Forecast 5.45 Prayer for the Day
5.47 Farming Today Presented by Anna Hill
6.00 Today with Sue MacGregor
8.35 (LW) Yesterday in Parliament
9.00 Midweek with the Times columnist Libby Purves
9.30 Carols for Choirs (3/4)
9.45 (LW) Daily Service
9.45 (FM) Serial: Scraps with Iannucci (2/5)
10.00 Woman's Hour with Jenni Murray and guests
11.00 Classic Toys See Choice
11.30 Pollyanna Dramatisation (2/4)
12.00 (LW) News Headlines; Shipping Forecast
12.00 (FM) News 12.04pm You and Yours
1.00 The World at One with Nick Clarke
1.30 Wildbrain The final heat of the wildlife quiz
2.00 The Archers (r)
2.15 Henry's Leg Final part, by Ann Pilling
3.00 Gardeners' Question Time (r)
3.30 Beating the System (3/3)
3.45 Colonel Clay: Master of Disguise
4.00 Case Notes with Graham Easton (r)
4.30 Thinking Allowed with Laurie Taylor
5.00 PM with Chris Lowe and Charlie Lee-Potter
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 Booked! Chaired by Ian McMillan
7.00 The Archers 7.15 Front Row with Mark Lawson
7.45 Under One Roof (r)
8.00 Education 2000
8.45 Keyword (2/4) (r)
9.00 Animals Behaving Badly New series (1/4)
9.30 Midweek (r) 10.00 The World Tonight
10.45 Christmas Book at Bedtime Diana Rigg reads Arthur Scholey's retelling of Baboushka
11.00 Late Night on 4: Children's Hour with Armstrong and Miller Offbeat comedy sketches
11.30 4 at the Store Stand-up comedy (r)
12.00 News 12.30 The Late Book: Out of Her Senses Written by the *Times* columnist Lynne Truss
12.48 Shipping Forecast 1.00 As World Service

FREQUENCY GUIDE. RADIO 1. FM 97.6-99.8. RADIO 2. FM 88.0-90.2. RADIO 3. FM 90.2-92.4. RADIO 4. FM 92.4-94.6; LW 198; MW 720. RADIO 5 LIVE. MW 693, 909. WORLD SERVICE. MW 648; LW 198 (12.45-5.55am). CLASSIC FM. FM 100-102. VIRGIN RADIO. FM 105.8; MW 1197; 1215. TALK RADIO. MW 1053, 1089.
Television and radio listings compiled by Ian Hughes, Rosemary Smith, Susan Thomson, Jane Gregory and John McNamara.

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Christmas cheer can damage your health

REVIEW



Joe Joseph

Once again it's that time of year when we have attended so many Christmas parties, in such quick succession, that it now only takes one large vodka to render us legless: usually it's about the 12th of the evening. But Christmas is also a time for thoughtful sacrifice, which is why — while the rest of us have been indulging in those seasonal traditions of office parties, carol singing, school nativity plays and scouring the Texaco 24-hour-garage shop for one or two last-minute Christmas presents (so this year it's Smear-Away windscreen wash for the wife, fun-size flasks of anti-freeze for the children, a dangly traffic light air-freshener for each sister, and an egg-and-cress sandwich for mum) — the people at Evans Woolfe Productions have been shouldering the burden of focusing on the grimmer aspects of Christmas on our behalf.

The documentaries they have made for Channel 4's **Smashed** series this week are the televisual equivalent of those drunken office party photos that have a startlingly sobering effect when circulated around the accounts department the morning after the do. They remind you how something which should be joyful can so easily turn into disaster — like, say, a poker game in which the cards aren't running for you, but obviously much worse (unless you're in the habit of playing poker for large-ish stakes, such as your life).

Stella Hanouni's documentary on Monday night addressed drink driving. *The Confrontation*, tomorrow night's film by Rhonda Evans, monitors how an alcoholic can become an emotional hurricane, wreaking havoc on his family's life. As for last night's documentary, Kate Barker's **Last Orders**, it contained some of the most distressing scenes I've watched on television in many months — far more dispiriting even than watching all those episodes of *Can't Cook, Won't Cook* with Ainsley Harriott. As the cameras followed an army of drunks and their victims as they filed in and out of the Walsgrave Hospital in Coventry, what emerged was an ugly, frequently horrifying, portrait of Britain's relationship with the bottle.

Being squeamish, I could have skipped all those close-up shots from the operating table of people — whose faces had been pummelled and glassed in drunken fights — having their sunken cheekbones levered back into position again by what looked like a sterilised masonry chisel. There were men who had strokes, who had cancers, who had brain damage, who had heart disease — men who had been turned into husks by a lifetime of unrestrained boozing. A three-year-old girl was being fed through a tube because she is suffering from foetal alcohol syndrome as a result of her mother drinking like a fish through pregnancy. Unpalatable facts appeared on the screen at regular intervals, like gloomy letters from a stern accountant reminding you just how devastatingly your financial affairs are unravelling: alcohol plays a part in 50 per cent of fights, 75 per cent of stabbings and up to 70 per cent of murders; the NHS spends £164 million a year treating injuries and illness caused by alcohol; two million people are dependent on alcohol — ten times the number addicted to illegal drugs; one in three divorce petitions cites alcohol as a factor in the marriage breakdown.

Unfortunately, reminding us periodically about how monstrous alcohol's effects can be when poured too liberally down the wrong throats (that's *your* throats we're talking about, obviously) has roughly the same effect as reminding us periodically why logarithms really are so important, even though we've never actually needed to use them since leaving school: we're persuaded, but then we forget again almost immediately. This time, we hadn't even had a chance to empty every bottle in the house down the sink while yelling "Get thee behind me, Satan", before Channel 4 — wary of coming across as Scrooge so close to Christmas — was actively helping us to forget by broadcasting **This Bloke Walks Into A Bar**. This was a film in which some of Britain's sharpest comedians told us how booze bolsters them. "We have always performed partially drunk," said Bob Mortimer. "We've never gone on stage sober — ever." Perhaps the Commons should experiment with this technique to liven up Prime Minister's Questions.

Perhaps the House of Commons should install an Aga in one corner of the chamber, because — if you believe the testimony of those who own one — an Aga lends an air of calm conviviality to any room and before you know it Blair and Hague would be chatting like old friends. Who knows, even Blair and Brown might soon be chatting like old friends. Watching **Agas and Their Owners** (BBC2), Jane Treays's affectionate film about Britain's infatuation with this Swedish oven, either made you want to rush out and buy one, or else it made you promise yourself that — even under extreme torture — you would never succumb to purchasing an oven owned by so many nutters.

"I've got various pieces of Aga equipment," one owner trilled. "Some Aga mugs; Aga scales; Aga doll's house model; an old Aga iron; and a teapot." All odd, but not as odd as the Aga accessory I recently encountered in a country house. It was a hand-towel specially made to hang from the Aga's handrail without slipping. It is ruched at the top and has a strip of Velcro which wraps over the rail and attaches itself to the top of the towel, which then drapes in a fan shape. The problem is it feels as though you're surreptitiously drying your hands on a Scotsman's sporran. Maybe that's an intrinsic part of the Aga's attraction.

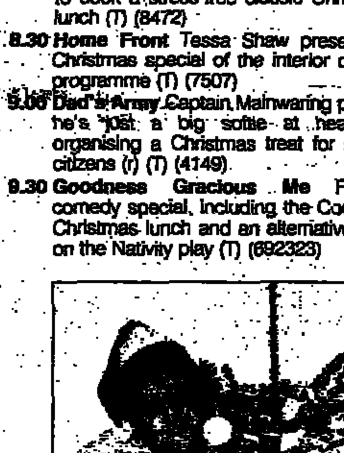
BBC1

6.00am Business Breakfast (38743)
7.00 BBC Breakfast News (T) (15217)
9.00 Children's BBC: Sweet Valley High (7718588) **9.25** The Fame Game (7711675) **9.55** Teletubbies (9975675)
10.20 News; Weather (T) (8376385)
10.30 FernGully: The Last Rainforest (1992) FILM Animated adventure about an endangered realm inhabited by magical creatures. Directed by Bill Kroyer (T) (1780120)
11.40 The New Adventures of Superman A toy-maker threatens to drain the world of all its generosity (r) (T) (7036762)
12.25pm Wipeout Celebrity Special (T) (9991385)
12.50 The Weather Show (T) (73766507)
1.00 One O'Clock News (T) (18304)
1.30 Regional News; Weather (45063781)
1.40 Neighbours Bill and Toadie go house-hunting (T) (97079168)
2.05 Battersea Dogs' Home Santa visits the home (86967323)
2.35 Due South Ray's informant is killed, which sets Fraser on a path leading back home to Canada (T) (2783304)
3.20 Children's BBC: Noddy (8606507) **3.30** Casper (3136946) **3.50** ChuckleVision (3149410) **4.10** Get Your Own Back (2440025) **4.35** The Queen's Nose (9425965) **5.00** Newsround (2052743) **5.10** Blue Peter (8775859)
5.35 Neighbours (r) (T) (577502)
6.00 Six O'Clock News; Weather (T) (694)
6.30 Regional News Magazine (946)
7.00 A Question of Sport The sprinter Donovan Bailey, the All-Black Jonah Lomu, England striker Dion Dublin and the former Wimbledon champion Pat Cash make up tonight's teams (T) (4410)
7.30 Animal Sanctuary John Craven visits a Californian home for unwanted pets, meeting orphaned bears and abandoned leopards (T) (830)
8.00 The Life of Birds David Attenborough examines the tactics birds use to survive in harsh environments (T) (963101)
8.50 The National Lottery: Amazing Luck Stories A chance meeting over the Internet which turned into so much more. Plus, Carol Smillie presents the midweek draw. Last in series (T) (324526)
9.00 Nine O'Clock News; Regional News; Weather (T) (6507)
9.29 National Lottery Update (444781)
9.30 CHOICE **Bring Me Sunshine: The Heart and Soul of Eric Morecambe** The family and friends of Eric Morecambe discuss his life and tragic death during a live show in 1984 (T) (5560052)
10.45 War and Piste Sacked resort manager Natasha chills out (6/6) (T) (468217)
11.15 Robbie Williams: Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em A profile (T) (224526)
11.55 Faces of Islam New series. Exploration of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting (1/4) (T) (672859)
12.15am That Riviera Touch (1966) Comedy, FILM starring Eric Morecambe and Ernie Wise as traffic wardens on holiday in the South of France. With Suzanne Lloyd and Peter Jeffrey. Cliff Owen directs (T) (682163)
1.45 Weather (7989415)
1.50 BBC News 24 (79110873)

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BBC2

7.00am Children's BBC Breakfast Show: King Greenfingers (6932033) **7.05** Teletubbies (5933675) **7.30** Yogi's Treasure Hunt (1878762) **7.50** To Me, To You (8841675) **8.20** Eek! the Cat (3010526) **8.35** Taz-Mania (8234236) **9.00** Animal Winter Warmers (312323) **12.00pm** The Tales of Canterbury (16385) **12.30** The Simpsons (4464255) **12.55** The Simpsons (2365878)
1.20 The Simpsons (r) (T) (44196897)
1.40 Rex the Runt The gang crash-land on Easter Island (r) (T) (50617304)
1.50 Rex the Runt The pals lose their house (r) (T) (50613588)
2.00 International Showjumping Highlights from Olympia (6357697)
2.50 The West The US Gold Rush in the mid-19th century, sparked by a sawmill worker's discovery of gold in the American River in California. Narrated by Peter Coyote (T) (4011101)
4.15 News; Weather (T) (1597491)
4.20 She Wore a Yellow Ribbon (1949) FILM John Ford western, starring John Wayne as a soon-to-retire Cavalry officer who takes drastic steps to avert a war with the Indians. With Joanne Dru (T) (79379120)
6.00 The Simpsons Bart wins an elephant which proceeds to eat the family out of house and home (T) (397507)
6.25 Rex the Runt The gang fiddle the National Lottery and manage to win Birmingham because of a typing error (T) (629743)
6.35 Star Trek: The Next Generation A time-travelling historian from the future refuses to help prevent a cosmic catastrophe (r) (T) (641781)
7.20 Rex the Runt (T) (660385)
7.30 Beowulf Animated version of the chilling tale of Beowulf, the warrior who fights Grendel to save King Hrothgar of the Danes (T) (472)
8.00 Gary Rhodes' Perfect Christmas How to cook a stress-free classic Christmas lunch (T) (8472)
8.30 Home Front Tessa Shaw presents a Christmas special of the interior design programme (T) (7507)
9.00 Dad's Army Captain Mainwaring proves he's just a big softie at heart by organising a Christmas treat for senior citizens (r) (T) (4149)
9.30 Goodness Gracious Me Festive comedy special, including the Coopers' Christmas lunch and an alternative take on the Nativity play (T) (692323)

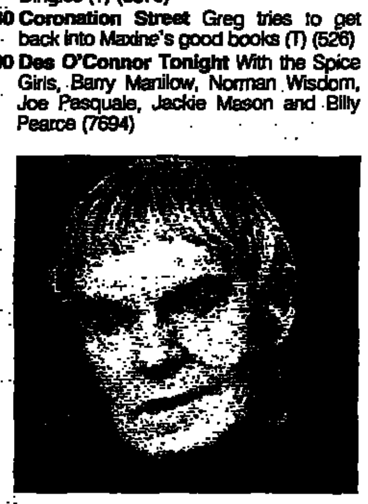


Louis Theroux celebrates Christmas in his own unique way (10.15pm)

10.15 Louis Theroux's Weird Christmas An offbeat Christmas gathering (T) (258052)
11.15 The Seven Samurai (1954) Akira FILM Kurosawa's influential adventure about six masterless samurai and an enthusiastic farmer's boy who protect a helpless village from ferocious bandits. Toshiro Mifune stars (45871762)
2.45am Weather (7298453) **2.50** Close

HTV

5.55am ITN Morning News (9406217)
6.00 GMTV (1992965)
9.25 ITN News (T) (4242694)
9.30 HTV News (T) (5133762)
9.35 CITV: House of Toons: Tiny Toon Adventures (1818439) **10.00** Rocky and the Dodos (7117410) **10.20** Art Attack Christmas Cracker (8201965)
10.50 The Wind in the Willows (T) (5733168)
12.20pm HTV News (T) (6674507)
12.30 ITN Lunchtime News (T) (62052)
1.00 Shortland Street Love eludes Minnie yet again (60912)
1.30 Crosswits (3/3) (T) (61323)
2.00 Wheel of Fortune (T) (5762)
2.30 ITN News Headlines (T) (6865859)
2.35 HTV News (T) (6857830)
2.40 Sharpe Sharpe returns to service on the Prince of Orange's staff (3/3) (r) (T) (79502762)
4.40 Survival Special Rare chance to see two of Europe's most endangered predators, the Spanish lynx and imperial eagle (T) (5394385)
5.40 ITN Early Evening News; Weather (T) (981694)
6.00 The Baldy Man Baldy causes havoc while trying to find the missing piece of a jigsaw puzzle (384033)
6.25 WALES: Wales Tonight; Weather (T) (505255)
6.25 WEST: HTV Weather (992101)
6.30 The West Tonight (T) (994)
7.00 Emmerdale Festive spirit eludes the Dingles (T) (6878)
7.30 Coronation Street Greg tries to get back into Maxine's good books (T) (526)
8.00 Des O'Connor Tonight With the Spice Girls, Barry Manilow, Norman Wisdom, Joe Pasquale, Jackie Mason and Billy Pearce (7694)



Derek Jacobi stars as the medieval monastic sleuth (9pm)

9.00 CHOICE **Cadfael** A woman's corpse is discovered, but the cause of death proves a mystery. Starring Derek Jacobi, Terrence Hardiman and Michael Culver (T) (2304)
10.30 ITN News; Weather (T) (635033)
10.45 HTV News and Weather (T) (909120)
10.55 CHOICE **The Things You Do for Love** Romantic drama, starring Anne Stallybrass (T) (2822588)
12.00am On Thin Ice: The Tai Babilonia Story (TVM 1990) FILM Fact-based drama chronicling the ice skater's withdrawal from the 1980 Olympics. Rachel Crawford stars. Directed by Zale Dalen (T) (562231)
1.40 The 1998 World Music Awards Highlights from Monte Carlo (r) (644960)
3.40 The Haunted Fishtank (r) (99373163)
4.10 Cybernet (87553250)
4.35 ITV Nightscreen (46013927)
5.05 Hurricanes (7977521)
5.30 Bugs Bunny's Wild World of Sports (r) (9706540)

CENTRAL

As HTV West except:
9.30-9.35am Central News (5133762)
12.20-12.30pm Central News; Weather (6674507)
1.00-1.30 Echo Point (60912)
2.35-2.40 Central News (6857830)
6.00 Beadle's Hot Shots (384033)
6.25-7.00 Central News; Weather (535255)
10.45-10.55 Central News; Weather (909120)
4.05am Central Jobfinder '98 (4666323)
4.40-5.05 Cybernet (13035415)

WESTCOUNTRY

As HTV West except:
9.30am Westcountry News (5133762)
9.33-9.35 Birthday People (5133762)
12.15-12.27pm Westcountry News; Weather (3368743)
12.27-12.30 Carols for Christmas (6682526)
1.00-1.30 Emmerdale (60912)
2.35-2.40 Westcountry News; Weather (6857830)
6.00-7.00 Westcountry Live (47743)
10.45-10.55 Westcountry News; Weather (909120)

MERIDIAN

As HTV West except:
12.15-12.30pm Meridian News; Weather (3368743)
1.00-1.30 Hope and Gloria (60912)
6.00 Meridian Tonight (762)
6.30-7.00 House Hunters (994)
10.45-10.55 Meridian News; Weather (909120)

ANGLIA

As HTV West except:
12.19pm Anglia Air Watch (6653014)
12.20-12.30 Anglia News and Weather (6674507)
1.00-1.30 Dinosaurs (60912)
5.39-5.40 Anglia Air Watch (344156)
6.00 Beadle's Hot Shots (384033)
6.23 Anglia Weather (993830)
6.25-7.00 Anglia News (505255)
10.44 Anglia Air Watch (926897)
10.45-10.55 Anglia News and Weather (909120)

S4C

Starts: **6.00am Sesame Street** (21131675) **7.00 For Better, For Worse** (46991507) **7.30 Super Trolls** (46970014) **8.00 The Big Breakfast** (21516762) **10.00 The Bigger Breakfast;** Saved by the Bell (21526149) **10.30 Eerie, Indiana** (T) (71481859) **10.55 The Secret World of Alex Mack** (r) (10295743) **11.30 Moesha** (T) (49687323) **12.00pm Madison** (46276052) **12.30 Judge Joe Brown** (11204269) **1.00 Planed Plant** (r) (46990878) **1.30 Classic Aircraft** (2/8) (T) (26159110) **2.00 Personal Services** (5/5) (T) (16758878) **2.30 Frances Bissell's West Country Christmas** (3/3) (r) (T) (11123830) **3.00 Wine Hunt** (3/6) (T) (16737385) **3.30 Tool Stories** (3/6) (T) (11135675) **4.00 Fifteen-to-One Highlights** (T) (11147410) **4.30 Planed Plant** (4270 3472) **5.30 Countdown** (T) (11134946) **6.00 Newyddion 6** (T) (19728410) **6.10 Heno** (T) (80465965) **7.00 Y Brodyr Bach** (T) (96287120) **7.45 Mil O Leisiau** (46398410) **8.45 Newyddion** (T) (23002410) **9.00 Gogwana** (56490385) **9.35 Friends** (T) (10655588) **10.05 Brookside Christmas Special** (T) (95594675) **10.40 Storm Force** (5/5) (T) (34913236) **11.40 Frasier** (r) (T) (75721014) **12.10am Comedy Lab** (83448076) **12.40 Righteous Babes** (T) (74354298) **1.35 All Back to Mine with Paul Weller** (T) (45859637) **2.10 Diwedd**

CHANNEL 4

5.10am Sharky and George (r) (7905304)
5.35 Two Stupid Dogs (r) (9736781)
6.00 Sesame Street (54781)
7.00 For Better, For Worse (r) (10453)
7.30 Super Trolls (r) (21878)
8.00 The Big Breakfast (93507)
10.00 The Bigger Breakfast; Saved by the Bell (96694)
10.30 Eerie, Indiana (r) (T) (9859052)
10.55 The Secret World of Alex Mack (r) (4118694)
11.30 Moesha (T) (3410)
12.00 Madison (34781)
12.30pm All Dogs Go to Heaven (1989) A FILM dead dog returns to Earth to seek revenge on the vicious canine gangster who had him bumped off. Animation, with the voice of Burt Reynolds (T) (82088439)
2.05 The Hedgehog in the Fog (r) (T) (77790897)
2.15 Pat and Mat Animated fun (77770033)
2.30 Frances Bissell's West Country Christmas (3/3) (r) (T) (675)
3.00 Wine Hunt Amateur enthusiasts visit the Rhône Valley (3/6) (T) (2439)
3.30 Tool Stories (3/6) (T) (120)
4.00 Fifteen-to-One Highlights (T) (255)
4.30 Countdown (T) (9419304)
4.55 Ricki Lake (T) (7745859)
5.30 Pet Rescue Awards (3/3) (T) (491)
6.00 Late Lunch Behaving Badly The cast of *Men Behaving Badly* join Sue Perkins and Mel Giedroyc (T) (45385)
7.00 Channel 4 News; Weather (T) (7120)
7.30 The Bear's Tale The making of new Channel 4 animation *The Bear* (T) (168)
8.00 Brookside Christmas Special Greg feels guilty over Nikki's distress (T) (3168)
8.30 The Real Holiday Show A terminally ill boy visits Orlando to swim with dolphins (6/8) (T) (2675)
9.00 CHOICE **The Confrontation** The family of an alcoholic tell him how it has affected them (T) (5472)
10.00 Frasier The short-tempered shrink's son visits (r) (T) (35410)



Harry Hill and friends offer their seasonal observations (10.30pm)

10.30 Harry Hill's Christmas Sleigh Ride Festive edition of the madcap comedy show (T) (11830)
11.00 Bob and Margaret (T) (4762)
11.30 Beg to Differ Seasonal look at life on society's margins (705101)
12.05am The Comedy Lab (3429786)
12.35 The 1998 Mobo Awards Hosted by Mel B (r) (T) (990250)
2.15 When the Wind Blows (1986) FILM Animation based on Raymond Briggs' book. A couple struggle to cope with the aftermath of a nuclear attack (T) (675637)
3.45 I Wake Up Screaming (1942) Taut FILM drama, starring Laird Cregar as a psychopathic detective obsessed by the dead girl whose murder he is investigating. Directed by H. Bruce Humberstone (T) (7848637)

CHANNEL 5

6.00am 5 News and Sport With Becky Anderson (6069236)
7.00 Wimzie's House (r) (6810323)
7.30 Milkshake! (2459323)
7.35 Havakazoo (r) (6021526)
8.00 George of the Jungle (r) (7432878)
8.30 What-a-Mess (r) (7431149)
9.00 Loggerheads (r) (7415101)
9.30 USA High (r) (2052859)
10.00 The Gods of Olympus (9907236)
10.20 Sunset Beach Maria is attacked (T) (1390007)
11.10 Leeza (r) (8317255)
11.55 Russell Grant's Postcards (99889965)
12.00 5 News at Noon (T) (7435965)
12.30pm Family Affairs (r) (T) (2056675)
1.00 The Bold and the Beautiful Sally is suspicious of Sheila (T) (6819694)
1.30 Sons and Daughters Fiona learns some sad news, 5 News Update (2055946)
2.00 100 Per Cent Gold (1336526)
2.30 Good Afternoon (2093101)
3.30 Home for Christmas (1990) Mickey FILM Rooney stars in this sentimental drama as a petty thief whose criminal activities lead him to the family he never knew he had (T) (7458588)
5.20 The Roseanne Show Entertainment and chat, presented by the droll comedian, 5 News Update (9925120)
6.00 100 Per Cent The computer-generated quiz (2261965)
6.30 Family Affairs Maria receives an ultimatum (T) (2252217)
7.00 5 News; Weather. A round-up of the day's stories (T) (1307014)
7.30 The Best of Pepsi Part one. Dr Fox presents highlights of the show, including Robbie Williams, All Saints and the Spice Girls live, (T) 5 News Update (2241101)
8.00 Survivor The story of an American family lost in a blizzard near the Cascade Mountains of Oregon who managed to survive the freezing conditions (r) (T) 5 News Update (6402149)



Morgan Fairchild stars in a tug-of-love drama (9pm)

9.00 Running Wild (1997) A desperate FILM mother attempts to locate and win back her daughter after the youngster runs away from their abusive home. Starring Morgan Fairchild, Chandra West and Michael Woods. Directed by Chuck Bowman: (T) 5 News Update (58029217)
10.40 The Movie Chart Show The best screen kisses (2702255)
11.15 100 Per Cent Guide to Sex (5418633)
11.45 Jenny Eclair: The Platinum Collection A live performance from the Edinburgh Festival (4453014)
1.00am NHL: American Ice Hockey Colorado Avalanche at Anaheim Mighty Ducks (34208927)
4.40 Club Class Comedy show (r) (81402279)
5.05 Move On Up (r) (19165250)
5.30 100 Per Cent (r) (7064786)

PAY TV: SATELLITE, CABLE AND DIGITAL

● For further listings see Saturday's *Vision*

SKY 1

8.00am Games World (4274491) **8.15** Games World (4264014) **8.30** Street Sharks (87897) **9.00** The Simpsons (78149) **9.30** Earthworm Jim (80472) **10.00** Hercules: The Legendary Journeys (41656) **11.00** The New Adventures of Superman (54120) **12.00pm** The Oprah Winfrey Show (8460101) **12.55** The Special K Collection (53581236) **1.00** Days of Our Lives (8541410) **1.55** The Special K Collection (77893323) **2.00** Sally Jessy Raphael (6377217) **2.55** The Special K Collection (2376472) **3.00** Jenny Jones (7244694) **3.55** The Special K Collection (8807120) **4.00** Best of Guilty! (94101) **5.00** Star Trek: Deep Space Nine (3323) **6.00** Married — With Children (2946) **6.30** Friends (6526) **7.00** The Simpsons (4052) **7.30** The Simpsons (5410) **8.00** Stargate SG-1 (46052) **9.00** Stargate SG-1 (33588) **10.00** Christmas Uncovered (36675) **11.00** Friends (95830) **11.30** Star Trek: Deep Space Nine (55168) **12.30am** Highlander: The Series (17163) **1.30** Long Play (6743057)

SKY BOX OFFICE

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To view any film telephone 0990 800888
SKY BOX OFFICE 1 (Transponder 26)
Face/Off (1997)
SKY BOX OFFICE 2 (Transponder 60)
George of the Jungle (1997)
SKY BOX OFFICE 3 (Transponder 59)
Home Alone III (1997)
SKY BOX OFFICE 4 (Transponder 58)
My Best Friend's Wedding (1997)

FILMFOUR

8.00pm Century of Cinema: Cinema of Unease (2808526) **8.00 The Navigator: A Medieval Odyssey (1988)** (2341588) **9.30 Four Weddings and a Funeral (1994)** (3853120) **11.30 Muriel's Wedding (1994)** (2997743) **1.15am Metropolitan (1990)** (5323521) **2.50 Circle of Friends (1995)** (7738182) **4.30 Godzilla Raids Again (1955)** (3803182) **6.00** Close

SKY PREMIER

6.00am Casper: A Spirited Beginning (1997) (87743) **8.00 A Kid in King Arthur's Court (1995)** (33149) **10.00 Carpool (1996)** (93946) **12.00pm Casper: A Spirited Beginning (1997)** (16472) **2.00 The Angel of Pennsylvania Avenue (1997)** (58897) **4.00 Carpool (1996)** (8897) **6.00 A Kid in King Arthur's Court (1995)** (17762) **7.30** The Barry Norman Interview with Pierce Brosnan (8120) **8.00 The Nephew (1996)** (40878) **10.00 Donnie Brasco (1997)** (57894014) **12.10am The Last of the High Kings (1996)** (640518) **1.55 Glory (1989)** (93074521) **4.00 Major Payne (1995)** (45434)

SKY MOVIEMAX

6.00am Back to the Planet of the Apes (1974) (99897) **7.30 Return to Snowy River (1988)** (76985762) **9.15 Jack (1996)** (727052) **11.15 The Buttercream Gang (1992)** (14298052) **1.00pm The End of the Golden Weather (1992)** (26859) **3.00 Back to the Planet of the Apes (1974)** (26556) **5.00 Return to Snowy River (1988)** (54946) **7.00 Jack (1996)** (71897) **9.00 Before and After (1995)** (41507) **11.00 Scream (1996)** (201526) **12.50am Bullet (1995)** (428250) **2.25 Gold in the Streets (1996)** (250366) **4.05 Switch in Time (1987)** (668569)

SKY CINEMA

12.00pm Magic Town (1947) (7302033) **4.00 The Great Dictator (1940)** (7332323) **6.00 Rebel Without a Cause (1955)** (9748385) **8.00 The Pink Panther Strikes Again (1976)** (8743830) **10.00 Badlands (1973)** (4178743) **11.35 M*A*S*H (1970)** (8688694) **1.30am The Hustler (1961)** (77909927) **3.45** Hollywood Hall of Fame: Robert Redford (6744434) **4.15 Magic Town (1947)** (9641322)

TNT

9.00pm Captain Nemo and the Underwater City (1969) (85175762) **11.00 The Maltese Falcon (1941)** (51126762) **1.00am The Last Run (1971)** (51184786) **3.00 Captain Nemo and the Underwater City (1969)** (14725540) **5.00** Close

SKY SPORTS 1

7.00am Sports Centre **7.15** Wrestling **8.15** Sports Centre **8.30** Unbelievable Sports **9.00** Aerobics **9.30** Footballers' Football Show **10.30** Inside Scottish Football **11.30** Fastrax **12.00pm** Aerobics **12.30** Spanish Football **2.30** Fastrax **3.00** Inside Scottish Football **4.00** Footballers' Football Show **5.00** Wrestling **6.00** Sports Centre **6.30** Unbelievable Sports **7.00** Motor Racing: Nigel Mansell — Ice Files **8.00** 25th Anniversary of Superstars **10.00** Sports Centre **10.15** Motor Racing: Nigel Mansell — Ice Files **11.15** Unbelievable Sports **11.45** Sports Centre **12.00am** 25th Anniversary of Superstars **2.00** Table Football **2.30** Motor Racing: Nigel Mansell — Ice Files **3.30** Sports Centre **3.45** Close

SKY SPORTS 2

7.00am Aerobics Oz Style **7.30** Sports Centre **7.45** Moto-Plus **8.15** Fastrax **8.45** Sports Centre **9.00** Fish TV **10.00** V-Max **10.30** Equestrianism **11.30** Ice Hockey **2.00pm** Golf Extra **5.00** Equestrianism **6.00** Watersports World **7.00** Golf Extra **10.00** Figure Skating **12.00am** Dancing **1.00** Watersports World **2.00** Sports Centre **2.15** Close

SKY SPORTS 3

12.00pm World Wrestling Federation: Shotgun **1.00** Fish TV **2.00** Boxing Superbouts **3.00** Olympic Series: Olympic Destinies **3.30** Dancing **4.30** V-Max **5.00** Figure Skating **7.00** Fish TV **8.00** Table Football **8.30** Unbelievable Sports **9.00** Dancing **10.00** Olympics. Golden Moments **10.30** Sky Sports Classics Gold. Snooker **11.30** Close

EUROSPORT

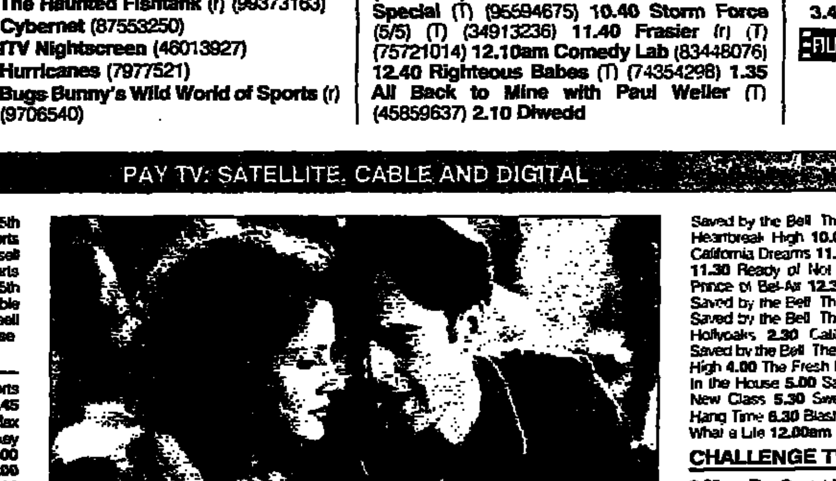
7.30am Extreme Sports **9.30** Olympic Games **11.00** Football **12.00pm** Truck Sports **1.00** Strongman **2.00** Football **4.00** Sumo **5.00** Karting **6.00** Stock Car **7.00** Live Darts **9.00** Boxing **10.00** Strongman **11.00** Football **1.00am** Close

UK GOLD

7.00am Crossroads **7.30** Neighbours **7.55** EastEnders **8.30** The Bill **9.30** Middlemarch **10.30** Angels **11.00** Dallas **11.55** Neighbours **12.25pm** EastEnders **1.00** Middlemarch **2.00** Dallas **2.55** The Bill **3.55** EastEnders **4.30** Angels **4.55 FILM: Carry On Again, Doctor (1969)** **6.45** Bread **7.50** May to December **8.00** One Foot in the Grave **8.40** Men Behaving Badly **10.20** Bottom **11.00** The Bill **12.00am** Bread **1.00** Some Mother's Do 'Ave 'Em **1.50** Keeping up Appearances **2.55** Shopping with Screenshop

GRANADA PLUS

6.00am The Box **7.00** On the Buses **7.30** The Fenn Street Gang **8.00** That's My Boy **8.30** Second Thoughts **9.00** Classic Coronation Street **9.30** Emmerdale Farm **10.00** thirtysomething **11.00** Hawaii Five-O **12.00pm** Classic Coronation Street **12.30** Emmerdale Farm **1.00** How's Your Father? **1.30** Watching **2.00** thirtysomething **3.00** The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes **4.00** The Professionals **5.00** Hawaii Five-O **6.00** Emmerdale Farm **6.30** Classic Coronation Street **7.00** Mission: Impossible **8.00** The Professionals **9.00** Classic Coronation Street **9.30** Saz Les **10.00** Jokers Wild **10.30** Hogan's Heroes **11.00** Granada Men and Motors



Julia Roberts and Rupert Everett star in P.J. Hogan's hit romantic comedy *My Best Friend's Wedding* (Sky Box Office 4)

DISNEY CHANNEL

6.00am Bear in the Big Blue House **6.25** Classic Toons **6.35** Teddy Bears' Christmas **7.00** Classic Toons **7.10** Aladdin **7.35** Timon and Pumbaa **8.00** 101 Dalmatians **8.25** Classic Toons **8.30** Hercules: The TV Show **9.00** Art Attack **9.20** Ned's Newt **9.30** Recess **9.45** Pepper Ann **10.00** Boy Meets World **10.30** Smart Guy **11.00** Teen Angel **11.30** Flash Forward **12.00pm** Doug **12.30** Dinosaurs **1.00 FILM: Brave Little Toaster to the Rescue (1997)** **2.15** Classic Toons **2.30** New Adventures of Winnie the Pooh **3.00** The Little Mermaid **3.30** Timon and Pumbaa **3.45** 101 Dalmatians **4.10** Hercules: The TV Show **4.40** Art Attack **5.00** Smart Guy **5.30** Recess **5.45** Pepper Ann **6.00** The Wonder Years **6.30** Boy Meets World **7.00** Honey I Shrunk the Kids: The TV Show **8.00 FILM: In the Nick of Time (1991)** **9.30** Home Improvement **10.00** Close

FOX KIDS NETWORK

6.00am Mortal Kombat Day **7.00pm** Close

NICKELODEON

6.00am Fraggle Rock **6.30** Muppet Babies **7.00** Watch You Own Wednesday **1.30pm** The Journey of Allen Strange **2.00** The Secret World of Alex Mack **2.30** Kenan and Kel **3.00** Clarissa Explains It All **3.30** Kablam! **4.00** Hey Arnold! **4.30** Rugrats **5.00** Sister Sister **5.30** Kenan and Kel **6.00** Sabrina the Teenage Witch **6.30** The Journey Of Allen Strange **7.00** Close

TROUBLE

7.00am Hollyoaks **7.30** USA High **8.00** Saved by the Bell: The College Years **8.30** Saved by the Bell: The College Years **9.00** Heartbreak High **10.00** Hang Time **10.30** California Dreams **11.00** Sweet Valley High **11.30** Ready or Not **12.00pm** The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air **12.30** In the House **1.00** Saved by the Bell: The College Years **1.30** Saved by the Bell: The College Years **2.00** Hollyoaks **2.30** California Dreams **3.00** Saved by the Bell: The New Class **3.30** USA High **4.00** The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air **4.30** In the House **5.00** Saved by the Bell: The New Class **5.30** Sweet Valley High **6.00** Hang Time **6.30** Blast **7.00** USA High **9.45** What a Life **12.00am** Close

CHALLENGE TV

5.00pm The Crystal Maze **6.00** Challenge Prize Time **6.15** Family Fortunes **6.45** Challenge Prize Time **6.55** Catchphrase **7.25** Karaoke Challenge **7.55** The Crystal Maze **9.00** Challenge Prize Time **9.15** Strike It Lucky **9.45** Challenge Prize Time **10.00** Endurance UK **10.30** Challenge Prize Time **10.45** The Cooler **11.15** Challenge Prize Time **11.30** Carnal Knowledge **12.30am** Love at First Sight **1.00** Strike it Lucky **1.30** The Pyramid Game **2.00** Second Guess **2.30** Family Fortunes **3.00** Endurance UK **3.30** Blockbusters **4.00** Fifteen-to-One **4.30** Give Us a Clue **5.00** Screenshop

BRAVO

8.00pm Nudge, Nudge, Wink, Wink **8.30** Bushido **9.00** L.A.P.D **9.30** The Dolls House **10.00** Taxicab Confessions **10.30** Scary Sex. Sexy Sci-fi Drama **11.00 FILM: The Bitch (1979)** **1.00am** Sex Bytes **1.35** Scary Sex. Sexy Sci-fi Drama **2.05** Taxicab Confessions **2.35** Nudge, Nudge, Wink, Wink **3.05 FILM: The Stud (1978)** **5.00** Freaky Stories **5.30** Bushido **6.00** Close

PARAMOUNT COMEDY

7.00pm Clueless **7.30** Desmond's **8.00** Roseanne **8.30** Just Shoot Me **9.00** Cybill **9.30** Seinfeld **10.00** Frasier **10.30** Cheers **11.00** Festival of Fun I **11.30** The Larry Sanders Show **12.00am** Late Night with David Letterman **1.00** Taxi **1.30** The Critic **2.00** Dr Katz **2.30** Soap **3.00** Hooperman **3.30** Nightstand **4.00** Close

THE SCI-FI CHANNEL

SATELLITE: 8pm-MIDNIGHT ONLY

7.30am Bloomberg Information Television **8.00** Sightings **9.00** Battlestar Galactica **10.00** Quantum Leap **11.00** Dark Shadows **11.30** The Ray Bradbury Theatre **12.00pm** The Twilight Zone **12.30** The Twilight Zone **1.00** Tales of the Unexpected **1.30 FILM: Santa Claus Conquers the Martians (1964)** **3.00** Battlestar Galactica **4.00** Amazing Stories **4.30** Mysteries, Magic and Miracles **5.00** Sightings **6.00** Time Trax **7.00** Quantum Leap **8.00** The Flash **9.00** PSI Factor: Chronicles of the Paranormal **10.00 FILM: Creepshow (1982)** **12.00am** PSI Factor: Chronicles of the Paranormal **1.00 FILM: Creepshow (1982)** **3.00** The Twilight Zone **3.30** Dark Shadows **4.00** Close

HOME & LEISURE

6.00am The Joy of Painting **6.30** The Great Gardening Plot **7.00** Garden Club **7.30** Our House **8.00** Rex Hunt Fishing Adventures **8.30** Doorstep DIY **9.00** The Joy of Painting **9.25** The Home and Leisure House **9.30** The Great Gardening Plot **10.00** Garden Club **10.30** Our House **11.00** Rex Hunt Fishing Adventures **11.30** Doorstep DIY **12.00pm** Home Again with Bob Vila **12.30** The House **1.00** A Cook's Journey **1.30** In the Workshop **2.00** Our House Down Under **2.30** Gimme Shelter **3.00** Two's Country **3.30** This Old House with Steve and Norm

DISCOVERY

4.00pm Rex Hunt Fishing Adventures **4.30** Walker's World **5.00** Connections 2 by James Burke **5.30** Jurassica **6.00** Animal Doctor **6.30** Ways of the Wild: Cover Story **7.30** Beyond 2000 **8.00** How Did They Build That? **8.30** Animal X **9.00** The Unexplained: History's Mysteries **9.30** The Unexplained: History's Mysteries **10.00** The Easy Riders **11.00** Real Lives: Not Too Young to Die **12.00am** Super Structures **1.00** Connections 2 by James Burke **1.30** Ancient Warriors **2.00** Close

ANIMAL PLANET

12.00pm Yindi, the Last Koala **1.00** Animal Doctor **1.30** Australia Wild **2.00** All Bird TV **2.30** Human/Nature **3.30** Animal Medics: Zoo Story **4.00** Jack Hanna's Zoo Life **4.30** Wildlife SOS **5.00** Pet Rescue **5.30** Australia Wild **6.00** Kratt's Creatures **6.30** Lassie **7.00** Animal Planet Classics: South Africa — A Sanctuary for Life **8.00** Animal Doctor **8.30** Profiles of Nature **9.30** Animal Detectives **10.00** Wildlife SOS **10.30** The Crocodile Hunter **11.00** Animal X **11.30** Emergency Vets **12.00am** Close

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

7.00pm Becoming a Mother **8.00** Bear Week: The Grizzlies **9.00** Passionate People: Wildlife Vet **10.00** Sea Monsters: Search for the Giant Squid **11.00** Alligator! **12.00am** Under the Ice

HISTORY

4.00pm Civil War Journal: The Boy Generals **5.00** Classic Cars: Morgan **6.00** The Holy Lands: Jerusalem — The 20th Century **7.00** Brute Force: Aircraft Carriers **7.30** Edward Windsor Presents Crown and Country

CARLTON FOOD

9.00am Food Network Daily **9.30** Food for Thought **10.00** Feasts of the World **10.30** Twelve Chefs of Christmas **11.00** What's Cooking? **11.30** Coxon's Kitchen College **12.00pm** Food Network Daily **12.30** Frances Bissell's Westcountry Christmas **1.00** Food for Thought **1.30** From the Ground Up **2.00** Caribbean Light **2.30** Food Network Daily **3.00** Surprise Chefs **3.30** Twelve Chefs of Christmas **4.00** Thoroughly Modern British **4.30** A Year at Ballymaloe **5.00** Close

LIVING

6.00am Tiny Living **9.00** The Roseanne Show **9.50** The Jerry Springer Show **10.40** Michael Cole **11.30** Brookside **12.00pm** Special Babies **12.30** Rescue 911 **1.00** Ready, Steady, Cook **1.35** Can't Cook Won't Cook **2.10** The Jerry Springer Show **3.00 FILM: David and Bathsheba (1951)** **5.20** Tempest **6.10** The Jerry Springer Show **7.00** Rescue 911 **7.30** Beyond Belief, Fact or Fiction **8.00** Ally McBeal **9.00** Halifax FP **11.00** The Spicy Sex Files **12.00am** Close

ZEE TV

5.00am Manabi **5.30** Music Time **6.00** Out and About **6.30** Beegi Ke Pg **7.00** Jaagran **7.30** News **8.00** India Business Report **8.30** Salaab **9.00** Rishtey: The Love Stories **10.00** Panchwan Mausam **11.00** Aashiana **11.30** Parampara **12.00pm FILM: Hindi Movie: Dil Ke Jharoke Main** **3.00** Chalo Cinema **3.30** Zee Health Show **4.00** Campus **4.30** Ek Minute **5.00** Mr Mintoo **5.30** Gumrah **6.00** Top of the Tops **6.30** Banegi Apni Baat **7.00** Baat Ban Jaye **7.30** Fun Filmi Style **8.00** News **8.30** Amanat **9.00** Hawaain **10.00** Ikke Pe Ikka **10.30** Woh **11.00** Purushkhetra **12.00am** News **12.30** Tandoori Masala **1.00** Jee Sahab **1.30** Raahat **2.00 FILM: Gujarti Movie: Narmada Ne Khathe** **4.30** Ridhi Siddhi



QUIZ OF THE YEAR 30

Test your sporting knowledge of 1998 and win prizes

SPORT

RACING 31

Tizzard saddled with extra responsibility for King George



WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 23 1998

OFT challenges 20-club 'cartel'

League faces court fight to avert split

BY JOHN GOODBODY AND RAYMOND SNODDY

THE Premier League said yesterday that it will be "fighting for its life" in a £25 million court case that could transform the televising and structure of football in this country. The "doomsday" scenario for the League is that if it loses the case, which will be the most expensive in British sporting history, ten elite clubs will break away and set up their own competition, because they will be allowed to set up their own television deals.

Other sporting bodies, such as the Rugby Football Union and the Football League, are watching the legal outcome anxiously because any decision against the Premier League would be a precedent for other television sporting rights in this country.

The four-month hearing in the Restrictive Practices Court, which will begin in London on January 12, hinges on whether the present £743 million broadcasting contract between the League, BSkyB and the BBC, that expires in 2001, is in the public interest.

The Office of Fair Trading (OFT) claims that the League's 20 member clubs are operating a "cartel" because it prevents the clubs from individually selling the rights to televise their games. John Bridgeman, the Director General of Fair Trading, said: "Any other business acting in this way would be subject to competition law and I see no reason why the selling of sport should be treated differently."

The OFT says that there is an unsatisfied demand for watching football on television. Only 60 of the 380 Premiership games are televised live. As a result, it argues, not only are fans often prevented from watching their favourite team, but also the costs are higher than they should be. The OFT claims that it is acting on behalf of consumers.

However, the OFT has only been able to find one international model for the type of television negotiations that it wants to see in Britain. It will call three witnesses from Mexico, where two television companies largely dominate the screening of football and negotiate with the individual clubs. The OFT is supported by only one of the 92 member clubs of the Premier League and Football League — Preston North End, of the second division.

Michael Grade, the former chief executive of Channel 4, has been called as an expert witness. The only consumer group supporting the OFT is the Guild of Master Victuallers. In the other corner, the Premier League has the support of all 20 member clubs, all but one of the Football League teams, and a wide range of supporters' organisations. David Mellor and the other members of the Government's Football Task Force will also give their backing.

It is believed that the Prime Minister and Tony Banks, the Minister for Sport, both football followers, are opposed to the OFT's action, but cannot say so in public.

Mike Lee, the Premier League spokesman, warned yesterday that chaos would ensue if the clubs were forbidden from negotiating television rights collectively. "It is vital to have some form of redistribution. If the rich become superrich and the rest are left behind, then you are left with an unbalanced competition," Lee said. He also questioned whether subscription sports channel charges would be any cheaper as a result.

One of the League's key arguments in court will be that if it loses the case there would be a real risk that a small number of leading clubs would break away, effectively destroying the Premier League — itself a split from the Football League in 1992.

The Premier League believes the case is not only potentially damaging, but a waste of money. It estimates its owns costs at more than £7 million and believes the BBC and BSkyB, in which News International, owner of *The Times*, has a 40 per cent stake, will spend similar amounts. The OFT will spend more than £2.5 million of taxpayers' money even before any possible appeal against a verdict, which is not expected before July. The League believes the case is backward-looking and that the market for television rights is likely to change by 2001 because of the arrival of different forms of digital television.

Yesterday Peter Leaver, chief executive of the Premier League, said that he would like to see exclusive live football distributed by different methods — digital cable, digital satellite and digital terrestrial, as well as free-to-air television. "We would like to be on every platform. Our task will be to ensure that the right pieces are in the right place. In 2001 it will be much more difficult to fit the pieces together," Leaver said.



Leaver: different aims



SIMON WALKER

Taylor and John, comrades in arms at Watford, enjoy a stroll round the ground

Korda failed steroid test at Wimbledon

BY JULIAN MUSCAT, TENNIS CORRESPONDENT

PETR KORDA, the Australian Open champion, was yesterday stripped of the prize-money and world ranking points he accrued at Wimbledon after testing positive for anabolic steroids at the championships in July.

A three-man independent appeals committee established that Korda, 30, had breached the sport's anti-doping programme. However, in sanctioning the player so mildly, the International Tennis Federation (ITF) took account of the "exceptional circumstances" in that Korda "did not know that he had taken, or been administered, the relevant substance".

Korda, beaten by Tim Henman in the Wimbledon quarter-finals, forfeits $94,529 (about £60,000) and 199 ranking points. He can consider himself fortunate to have escaped so lightly. He earned $1.4 million alone this year, and despite the lost ranking points, he will retain his present world ranking at No 13.

Plagued by minor injuries in the build-up to Wimbledon, Korda strained his Achilles tendon in the closing stages of his fourth-round match before succumbing to Henman in the next round. All players bear responsibility for notifying the ITF of any medication they may be taking. This information is officially logged so that any positive sample can be matched with the contents of that medication.

However, a spokesman for the ITF confirmed last night that Korda failed to inform the federation that he was taking any treatment. Whether this was down to procedural ignorance on the player's part remained unclear — although Korda has a long history of injuries in a career spanning 12 years.

The case marks the fourth such incident in tennis over as many years. Mats Wilander and Karol Novacek were banned for three months after testing positive to a recreational drug at the French championships in 1995; Samantha Reeves went unsanctioned, on account of her naivety, for testing positive to steroids in 1997; and in 1996 Ignacio Truyol was banned for one year, also for steroid use.

Korda was legally represented at the two-day hearing in London. The three-man appeals committee, comprising a Queen's Counsellor sitting alongside medical and technical experts, assumed responsibility for the case when one half of the original sample confirmed the presence of Nandrolone metabolites, a class one prohibited substance under the ITF's anti-doping programme.

Korda is the first player to fail a drugs test at Wimbledon — although the All-England Club only introduced official testing last year.

The samples were tested at laboratories approved by the International Olympic Committee. While Korda has exhausted the appeals process in respect of tennis authority, he retains the option of pursuing the matter in courts of law.



Korda: injuries

Korda was not available for comment last night.

Korda enjoyed one of his best years in 1998. He landed his first grand-slam title in Australia 11 months ago and had the opportunity, on numerous occasions in the spring, to supplant Pete Sampras as the world No 1.

More than 1,000 drugs tests are taken annually from tennis players — including out-of-competition tests where officers have the authority to arrive unannounced. The ITF responded to Korda's case after inquiries from *The Times*.

In a statement, the federation said: "Korda committed an offence contrary to the ITF's laws . . . no further sanctions were imposed for this doping offence, which we have proved in this case."

England's pride in question

FROM ALAN LEE
CRICKET CORRESPONDENT IN HOBART

GRAHAM GOOCH last night questioned the pride and professionalism of an England team so lacking in self-esteem that it will now be a considerable surprise if the Ashes Test series ends in anything other than a 4-0 defeat.

An increasingly despairing Gooch was visibly distressed by a nine-wicket defeat against a virtual Australian second XI. "We were totally abject," he said. "I'm pretty upset, because I'm not in it for that kind of performance." A chastened and subdued tour party flew to Melbourne last night and now face Tests over Christmas and New Year.

England's offence was not to lose, for this had been an artificial and unsatisfactory game, but to lose without dignity or discipline. Having set the host team 376 to win in a minimum of 78 overs, they were beaten with 90 minutes and 22 overs to spare.

Gooch said later: "It's not good enough. We didn't do anything very well. The wicket was very flat but the disappointing thing was that we didn't put up a fight."

Gooch said there would be no change to England's programme before the fourth Test, which starts on Boxing Day, and that this latest setback would have little effect on selection. "I don't see how naughty boy nets can change anything and you could talk all day about the configuration of our team but it's the way we've been playing that isn't good enough."

Cut to ribbons, page 34

Sir Elton performs on favourite stage

Lynne Truss takes notes as a rock legend tries to drum up more support

The thing Elton John can't abide is "what he perceives to be a lack of effort". So said Graham Taylor, Sir Elton's favourite football manager, at Vicarage Road yesterday. Elton is known for the effort he personally invests, of course. Undertaking 130 concerts in 180 days, for example, and writing film scores at the same time. Being chairman of Watford FC and chief mourner of designers and princesses.

No, the words "Elton John" and "shocking slouch" have never been connected in the public mind. Before the World Cup, he surprised the television-viewing public by indicating what he would be prepared to do for English football: and, let me tell you, it was more than I would. "If England win the World Cup, will you come back on the show and sing a duet with me?" asked Des O'Connor. Elton huffed and looked at him. "If England win the World Cup," he said momentously, "I'll sleep with you."

Yesterday, the commitment was all to entertaining the press on a foggy December morning with plain-speaking football quotes — and it was a characteristically world-class job. "What do you think of Hoddle and Beckham?" we asked (rather off the point, when the ostensible subject was the future of Watford). "I think Hoddle has some resentment because David's had more success as an England player than he ever did, and because David's also got a nice girlfriend who's famous." The attitude of players like Di Canio and Van Hooijdonk is "just disgusting". £18 million for Alan Shearer is ridiculous for someone "who hasn't found his form after coming back from injury and didn't play well at the World Cup".

"More!" we cried — as, suddenly, Watford Football Club looked a lot more interesting and attractive than it formerly did. What a splendid place Watford is, after all. Fancy having a moose as your logo! Moreover, what a fine, voluble chap Taylor is. His doctor has ordered him not to talk much — his recent throat operation had taken him to death's door — so he talked for 3½ hours without a break. His doctor will doubtless phone him up now and tell him: "Do I not like that."

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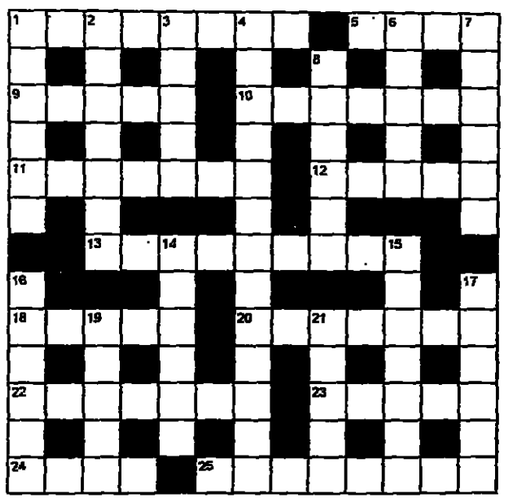
Watford is on the up and up, you see. This was the only substance on offer, really. Elton was not announcing an enormous investment in new players, or pledging his presence in the directors' box for the remainder of the season. Considering the personal glamour attaching to the Watford chairman, his club has disappointingly little flash. "Sexy football" strikes few chords as a concept here, even with the moose; meanwhile huge transfer fees are simply not considered.

Yesterday's PR exercise was about harmony. Graham and Elton presented themselves as warm-hearted long-distance chums; concerned for each other's welfare, they warn each other against burnout, just as Elton writes to Gazza in his clinic, to tell him not to forget he's a genius, or lends his house in the South of France to "David and Victoria" when times get tough. Elton is now a wise, kind veteran of superstardom, dispensing advice and offering help. It's very pleasant, if a bit unnerving. Every English footballer who renounces addiction, it seems, is almost bound now to receive a letter of congratulation from Elton.

The only fly in the ointment yesterday was the niggling question of how to get Watford back on the map in terms of attendance, when it has got this one big attraction *who is almost never there*. Elton says he doesn't like gimmicks, which is pretty odd coming from a man who once wore 18-inch platform shoes and specs like dinner plates, but is clearly sincerely meant. Toilets and food are priorities; and definitely no big outlays.

Watford are evidently looking forward to the Premiership with the same prim emotions as a Salvation Army worker entering an opium den. But the real stumper is surely what to do about Elton himself. He's the ultimate gimmick; the thing Watford's got that nobody else has (apart from the moose, of course). And yet he won't be attending the all-important FA clash against Tottenham on January 2 because — well, what else do football chairmen do? He'll be in Los Angeles writing the music for a film.

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD



No 1596

ACROSS
1 Conceited (8)
5 False god (4)
9 River mammal (5)
10 Water shortage (7)
11 Close-grouped items (7)
12 Kiosk: temporise (5)
13 *Ballets Russes* impresario (9)
18 One living abroad *(abbr.)* (5)
20 Temper outburst (7)
22 Yield (to) (7)
23 Cover (with concealing fabric) (5)
24 Insect: MND fairy (4)
25 Mad (8)

DOWN
1 Ornamental clasp (6)
2 Take aback (7)
3 Fortune-telling cards (5)
4 In drunken slump (5,3,5)
6 Unchallengeable belief (5)
7 Pull no punches in tirade (3,3)
8 Diplomatic officer (6)
14 The Once and Future King (6)
15 Alternative reading (7)
16 Cargo thrown overboard (6)
17 Be about to occur (6)
19 Small lace loop (5)
21 Jog (5)

SOLUTION TO NO 1595
ACROSS: 2 Pass/over 6 Bitter 8 Hoaxed 9 Monitor 10 Tongs 12 Chauvinism 16 Asymmetric 18 Adult 20 Prairie 21 Legion 22 Argosy 23 Dishevel
DOWN: 1 Timothy 2 Priority 3 Sports 4 Vixen 5 Radish 7 Tribunal 11 Omitting 13 Immortal 14 Tiniest 15 Pallid 17 Stooge 19 Urges

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